THE SECOND WORLD WAR BY NIGHT

GERMAN NIGHT FIGHTERS VERSUS BOMBER COMMAND 1943–1945

MARTIN W. BOWMAN

This new volume from Martin Bowman examines the closing years of the Second World War, as the tide turned against the German and Axis forces. It includes riveting accounts describing aerial battles between German night-fighters and Allied bomber crews during some of the most dramatic night time conflicts of the latter war years. It shines a light on the experiences of allied bomber crews who found themselves on the receiving end of enemy attacks, and it profiles several high-scoring Luftwaffe night fighter pilots who stood in opposition to these allied forces.

Viewing Bomber Command's operations through the eyes of the enemy, the reader is offered a fresh and intriguing perspective. Set in context by a well-researched and insightful historical narrative, these snippets of pilot and crew-member testimony work to offer an authentic sense of events as they played out.

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German Night Fighters Versus Bomber Command 1943-1945

Martin W. Bowman

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Contents

Prologue	.....	4
Chapter 1 The Prinz of The Darkness	.....	5
Chapter 2 Viktor! Viktor!	.....	23
Chapter 3 Pauke-Pauke!	.....	27
Chapter 4 Horrido!	.....	47
Chapter 5 Menacing The Reich	.....	79
Chapter 6 Zweimots and Viermots	.....	112
Chapter 7 'Round the Clock'	.....	127
Chapter 8 Moskitopanik!	.....	146
Chapter 9 In The Dark All Cats Are Grey	.....	172
Chapter 10 Vesuvius	.....	187
Chapter 11 Unnternehmen 'Gisela'	.....	203
Chapter 12 The Kings of the Earth	.....	230
Acknowledgements	.....	249
Index	.....	250

Prologue

The German night fighters were just as clever, if not cleverer than ours. They had the aircraft to do it in and they were very good, the way they used to come in, particularly the various types of approaches. Even now you can get nightmares reading about some of the raids where they operated the 'Wild Sows' and the offset guns and all the rest of it. You don't stand much chance in the Lancaster with pea-shooters which couldn't knock anything down. We were using those things from the Western Front in the First World War, the .303s. They had got a range of next to nothing.

With the German night fighters, they'd come in - some used to operate down below, some to one side - and position themselves with the upward-firing guns. They were a menace because they'd get on the blind side underneath the aircraft where no one could see them. They'd wait for their moment, pull the throttles back, pull the nose up slightly and take a Lancaster from the nose right down to the tail with the cannon. Some of them didn't even do that. They'd go for the wings and get the tanks first. Once you'd got a twenty-mill cannon shell in the tanks; that was it. Oh, it was a very dicey business! It was a good thing half the people didn't know what was happening. I'm sure they wouldn't have gone if they had!

Flying to Berlin some pilots took the view they should get in and out of the target as quickly as possible. Be the first one home, that way there'd be less chance of getting hit. They'd charge into the target, getting all they could out of the engines and to hell with whoever used the aircraft after them. They also knew that with lots of planes being damaged and others running out of petrol there'd be hardly any airfields to land on. We always knew who they were because they'd get home about an hour before anyone else.

'Sensible and reasonable pilots, and I regarded myself as one, would be careful how they used the engines and would take indirect routes, so they arrived back later. I always tried to fly so that there would be about two hours of petrol left when I got back to England. I flew around for twenty minutes and then came in. An experienced pilot would bide his time: he was safe while he was up there.

***War In The Air* compiled by Edward Smithies**

Chapter 1

The Prinz Of The Darkness

'...he was boundlessly disillusioned and boundlessly disappointed. In 1943 he contemplated the thought of shooting Hitler. It was only out of sense of honour and duty that Heinrich went on fighting, carried along by the ambition to overtake Major Lent in his score of enemy aircraft shot down'. In her memoirs, Tatiana von Metternich reported that Wittgenstein planned to kill Hitler after the ceremony at which he received his Knight's Cross in 1943. He said, 'I am not married, I have no children - I am expendable. He will receive me personally. Who else among us can ever get as near to him?'

Princess Walburga, Baroness von Friesen (1885-1970) mother of Heinrich Alexander Ludwig Peter Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein who at the time of his death was the highest scoring night fighter pilot in the Luftwaffe and still the third highest by the end of World War II, with 83 aerial victories.

Slimly built, with a slender face and high forehead his bearing was that of a confident, well-educated man of good family. He was ambitious, intelligent and forthright, highly strung, too intense. Deep, abiding patriotism was the foundation of his character. Service as an officer in the armed forces was his family tradition and his youthful goal.

Little else in life meant anything to him but service to his nation.[1] Heinrich Alexander Ludwig Peter Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein was born on 14 August 1916 in Copenhagen, Denmark as a member of the aristocratic family Sayn-Wittgenstein. He was the second of three sons of Gustav Alexander Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein (1880-1953), a diplomat at the German embassy in Copenhagen and his wife, Walburga. His brother Ludwig was older and Alexander younger. In April 1937 Sayn-Wittgenstein decided on a military career and joined the 17th Kavallerie- Regiment (17th Cavalry Regiment) in Bamberg. He transferred to the Luftwaffe in the summer of 1937 and in October he was accepted at the flight training school in Braunschweig. He received his officer's commission and was promoted to Leutnant in June 1938. Sayn-Wittgenstein served on various airfields from where he flew the Junkers Ju 88 and the Heinkel He 111. In the winter of 1938-39 he served as a Kampfbeobachter (combat observer or navigator) in Kampfgeschwader (KG) 54 at Fritzlar. On 1 September 1939 Sayn-Wittgenstein experienced his first combat action on the Western Front in the Battle of France. Initially he served as an observer on the He 111H-3 from KG1 'Hindenburg' piloted by Gerhard Baeker, with whom he flew high-altitude sorties against RAF Biggin Hill. In the winter of 1940-41 Sayn-

Wittgenstein returned to pilot school and took his Luftwaffe Advanced Pilot's Certificate 2, confirming proficiency for blind-flying, a pre-requisite for night duty and returned to a combat unit in March 1941. In preparation for Operation 'Barbarossa', the German invasion of the Soviet Union, his unit moved to Eichwalde in East Prussia. In support of Heeresgruppe Nord (Army Group North), KG1 flew its first sorties against Liepāja and then Jelgava and Riga, targeting the heavily-occupied enemy airfields. In August 1941 Sayn- Wittgenstein transferred to the night fighter force. By this time, he had flown 150 combat sorties and was awarded both classes of the Iron Cross, Honour Goblet of the Luftwaffe and the Front Flying Clasp of the Luftwaffe for Bomber crews in Gold.

Sayn-Wittgenstein volunteered for the night fighter force and was appointed Staffelkapitän of 9./NJG2 on 1 November 1941. He claimed his first night Abschuss (victory); a Bristol Blenheim forty kilometres (25 miles) west of Walcheren on the night of 6 May 1942. He shot down three aircraft in both the nights of 31 July (victories 15-17) and 10 September (victories 19-21), receiving the Knight's Cross (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes) on 7 October after 22 Abschüsse. The award was presented by General Josef Kammhuber, after which they both inspected the personnel of 9./NJG2. Appointed Gruppenkommandeur of IV./NJG5 on 1 December, Hauptmann Sayn-Wittgenstein was moved to the Eastern Front in February 1943. Unteroffizier Herbert Kümmritz, who had six months of operational Bf 110 experience with II./NJG3 at Stade, joined Sayn-Wittgenstein's crew as his bordfunker. Kümmritz had studied high frequency technology at the Telefunken Company in Berlin before the war. Prior to Kümmeritz, Sayn-Wittgenstein had rejected all his previous radio operators after only a few sorties.

In late spring 1943 Kammhuber ordered IV./NJG5 to relocate to Rennes, France in defence of the German U-boat bases. At Gilze-Rijen the order was issued to convert to the Bf 110 night fighter. Sayn-Wittgenstein flew the Bf 110 for one short flight only, but on the night of 24 June, the aircraft had technical problems and was considered unserviceable. Kümmeritz and Sayn-Wittgenstein took off in their usual Ju 88C and shot down four Lancasters (victories 32–35). Sayn- Wittgenstein never flew another Bf 110 again, preferring his Ju 88 to the Bf 110. The gruppe was relocated to the Eastern Front again and re-designated as I./NJG100 on 1 August 1943. While stationed at Insterburg, East Prussia, Sayn-Wittgenstein shot down seven aircraft in one sortie; six of them within 47 minutes (victories 36-41), in the area north-east of Oryol on 20 July. He claimed three more victories on 1 August (victories 44-46) and three more on the night of 3 August (victories 48-50). He was appointed Gruppenkommandeur of II./NJG3 on 15 August. Sayn- Wittgenstein became the 290th recipient of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub) after 54 aerial victories on 31 August. The award was presented at the Führerhauptquartier in East Prussia on 22 September. For these achievements he also received a letter from the commanding general of 4 Jagddivision Generalleutnant Joachim-Friedrich Huth. On 1 December Sayn-Wittgenstein was ordered to take command of II./NJG2.

Wilhelm Johnen commented on the arrival of Sayn-Wittgenstein at his unit: '... A madman, I thought, as I took my leave. Once outside I got into conversation with the Prinz's crew. Among other things they told me that their princely coachman had recently made his radio operator stand to attention in the plane and confined him to his quarters for three days because he (the radio operator) had lost his screen [radar contact with the enemy] during a mission.'. Herbert Kümmeritz recalled that Sayn-Wittgenstein often used his seniority and rank to ensure that he would get the best initial contact with the incoming bombers. He would often wait on the ground until the best contact was established. If another fighter had already engaged the enemy before Wittgenstein arrived, the Prinz would announce on the radio 'Hier Wittgenstein - geh weg!' (Wittgenstein here, clear off!). Wolfgang Falck felt that Sayn-Wittgenstein was not officer-material, describing him as: 'a most capable pilot and extremely ambitious, as well as an individualist [but] he was definitely not the type to be the leader of a unit. He was not a teacher, educator, or instructor. But he was an outstanding personality, a magnificent fighter and a great operational pilot. He had an astonishing sixth sense - an intuition that permitted him to see and even to feel where other aircraft were. It was like a personal radar system. He was also an excellent air-to-air shot. 'During the time that he was under my command, I was ordered one night to Berlin to the Ministry. So was Wittgenstein, unbeknown to me. He was to receive the Knight's Cross the following morning from Göering. By an amazing coincidence we got the same train, the same sleeping car and the same compartment.

'I was happy to discuss problems with him free from distractions and interruptions and I was determined to make the most of our lucky encounter. I was keen to know his opinion on several operational problems. He was very nervous, with fidgeting hands and an obvious air of anxiety about him. He was anxious because the other night aces might be successful while he was 'sitting in a train doing nothing' - as he put it. He was at this time in rivalry with Streib or Lent, I forget which and they were within a kill or two of each other. It made him nervous to think he was giving his rival a scoring chance while he went to get his Knight's Cross. I also had a devil of a time getting him to go on vacation for the same reason.' In late 1942 Wittgenstein was sent to Russia by Falck to help devise tactics countering Soviet night air operations. The Prinz took command of one of the first 'Dark Night Trains' or rail borne self-contained night fighter bases consisting of perhaps eighteen wagons and ready to move in two hours or less. He scored 29 Abschüsse in Russia. When Falck visited the Prinz during a tour of Russian Front night fighter airfields, Wittgenstein was again anxiety personified: 'I saw personally that in one night he made three kills in fifteen minutes. That was not enough for him. It excited his deepest anxieties that on the Western Front they were scoring more kills than he in the East. He was downright envious. It was not always easy for us to co-operate with him as a subordinate because of this tremendous ambition.'[2]

Sayn-Wittgenstein was appointed Geschwaderkommodore of NJG2 on

1 January 1944; he had already reached 68 aerial victories. He claimed shooting down six Viermots on the same night (victories 69-74). In late 1943 his bordfunker Kümmeritz went on study leave and was replaced by Feldwebel Friedrich Ostheimer, who flew with Sayn-Wittgenstein from October 1943 until January 1944. Ostheimer recalled: 'At Arnhem-Deelen Prinz Wittgenstein spent his time either in his bungalow or at the command post. We, the flight engineer, the first mechanic and I were on standby in a small hut beside the hangar, which housed our Ju 88. We only saw the Prinz when he came to fly. After landing he returned immediately to his quarters. Once, a few nights before we were shot down, he invited us to his bungalow for an evening meal before stand-by commenced. Prinz Wittgenstein was a tall, good-looking officer with a fine, reserved and disciplined personality. As a night-fighter he did his utmost, shunned no danger and never considered his own life.'

On the night of 29/30 December Berlin was again the target for RAF Bomber Command and 712 aircraft were despatched. Twenty aircraft (eleven Lancasters and nine Halifaxes) failed to return. A long approach route from the south, passing south of the Ruhr and then within twenty miles of Leipzig together with Mosquito diversions at Düsseldorf, Leipzig and Magdeburg, caused the German controller great difficulties and there were few fighters over Berlin. Bad weather on the outward route also kept down the number of German fighters finding the bomber stream. 182 people were killed; more than 600 were injured and over 10,000 were bombed out. Altogether, twenty bombers were lost. DS718 on 408 Squadron captained by 24-year old Flight Lieutenant Walter Wilton RCAF was one of the eleven Lancasters that failed to return. All seven crew were killed after an attack by Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer who claimed the aircraft as his 42nd Abschuss.

With his score standing at 68 victories, 27-year-old Major Wittgenstein became Kommodore of NJG2 on 1 January 1944. That night Bomber Command went to Berlin with a force of 421 Lancasters. One of the crews on the Order of Battle was captained by Flying Officer James Gilmour 'Gil' Bryson on 550 Squadron, who had joined the squadron on its formation at Waltham, Grimsby on 25 November 1943, having transferred from 12 Squadron at Wickenby where they had begun operations on 3 September. The crew's last two trips had been to the 'Big City' before they had received two days of rest. The Lancaster's starboard wing and the incendiary bombs in the front of the bomb bay were set on fire by a surprise 'Schräge Musik' attack.[3] Most probably Bryson's Lancaster was one of the six shot down in quick succession by Wittgenstein (his 69-74th victories) at the controls of a Ju 88C-6 equipped with SN-2 radar and 'Schräge Musik' and his third kill of the night. Wittgenstein and Feldwebel Fritz Ostheimer had succeeded in penetrating the bomber stream bound for Berlin. Most of these Viermots were Path Finders flying at the front of the bomber stream. Lancaster III JA711 'A-Apple' on 9 Squadron skippered by 23-year old Flying Officer Geoffrey Ward is believed to have been shot down by Wittgenstein on approach to Berlin at 0310 hours. All seven crew were killed. Ward had

flown his first op, on Hamburg, over five months earlier. Since then he had been on six Berlins, thirteen other ops and now a final Berlin, with the same crew throughout except for one trip when his bomb aimer had been replaced by the Bombing Leader.[4]

On the outward journey Lancaster III LM377 QR-F captained by 23-year old Flying Officer George E. Sharpe RCAF on 61 Squadron is thought to have been shot down by Wittgenstein and Ostheimer at around 0200 hours. All seven crew were killed. Twenty minutes later Lancaster III LM372 PO-K captained by 30-year old Australian Flight Lieutenant Leo Braham Patkin on 467 Squadron was claimed shot down by Wittgenstein, the aircraft losing a wing which caused it to spin in. All seven crew and 21-year old Flight Sergeant James Mudie RAAF the 'second dickie' flying as second pilot for experience were killed, the aircraft crashing near the village of Altmerdingsen where the explosion on impact was so violent that it shattered roofs and windows of nearby houses. Mudie, of Claremont, Western Australia had been born in Dundee, Scotland on 20 May 1922 and had enlisted in the RAAF at Perth. Patkin, who was from Melbourne, left a widow, Claire, of South Tarra, Victoria.

'A-Apple' flown by 33-year old Wing Commander William 'Jock' Abercromby DFC* who had recently moved to command 83 Squadron in 8 Group after his ops on 619 Squadron, which included flying Ed Murrow to Berlin the previous December, took off at 2300 hours. The son of David Grewar and Euphemia Abercromby of Brechin, Angus, prior to the Second World War he was an apprentice at RAF Halton. Following the completion of his training as a pilot, his first operational tour was on 50 Squadron where he eventually received the DFC in November 1942. Abercromby took part in the daylight raid on Le Creusot and one of the night raids on Genoa. In October 1942 he flew one of the aircraft detailed to attack Milan in daylight. Although faced with serious opposition he descended to within 100 feet before releasing his incendiaries on the target. His aircraft was hit many times and the rear gunner was mortally wounded. A Bar to his DFC came in December 1943. The citation reads: 'Since being awarded the DFC this officer has completed many sorties. In December 1943 he took part in an attack on Berlin. Whilst over the outskirts of the city his aircraft was illuminated by a large concentration of searchlights. By good tactics, Wing Commander Abercromby manoeuvred his aircraft from the cone and then completed a successful attack. Throughout his tour, this officer's efforts have been featured by great determination and good judgment.'

On taking command of 83 Squadron Abercromby had confronted an officer he had heard was one of the leading exponents of the theory of 'weaving' in order to avoid attacks by enemy fighters and in front of several other officers had inferred that such flying was cowardly and said that it had to cease. Henceforth all pilots on 83 Squadron were to fly straight and level so as to provide a stable platform for their gunners to fire from. The young officer said that he had 'weaved' for over forty ops and wasn't going to change his tactics now and further that their job was to mark targets, not to shoot down enemy fighters. He became so angry with Abercromby that

he told him he could fly straight and level if he wished but that he would give him only three weeks on the squadron if he did so. He had to be restrained from striking the new commander and was escorted from the room.[5]

ND354 'A-Apple' was a brand new Lancaster, one of thirteen aircraft to leave Wyton that first night of 1944 after bad weather had delayed take-off for several hours. At the Dutch coast Abercromby asked Sergeant Lionel H. Lewis the 19-year old flight engineer to go into the bomb aimer's position to push 'Window' out, which he did, taking his parachute with him. 'By now we had reached our operational height of 21,000 feet and Wing Commander Abercromby engaged the auto pilot and we were flying straight and level on a very predictable course. In quite a short time we saw the whole sky lit up like a cauldron; twice this happened and the pilot requested the navigator to log that it was an aircraft blowing up. We had no warning when the aircraft gave a lurch and went into a steep dive and I could see a glow coming from the bomb bay area, and the order came to abandon aircraft. I grabbed my parachute and put it on, removed my helmet and oxygen mask and remember putting my hands on the cushion to get at the escape hatch, but did not make it. There were vivid colours and an explosion. When I came to, I was falling through the air, on my back, spinning round and round. I pulled the parachute release and the handle and cable just came away and nothing happened. I got my fingers under the flap and pulled at the press studs, and the parachute opened with such a jerk that I passed out again. I came to and felt very cold and found that my flying boots had gone. I came down amongst fir trees and the parachute caught up and I was swinging six feet off the ground. I released the harness and fell to the ground. The feeling of utter loneliness and wondering what to do next is something I will never forget. I was not injured, only superficial wounds to my head and hands, and very heavy bruising down my left side.'[6]

'A-Apple' exploded over Holland at Lutten in the province of Overijssel, five kilometres northeast of Vechta at 0300 hours. Lewis was the sole survivor. It may have been the Scot's order banning weaving or banking gently over enemy territory and instead flying straight and level at all times that resulted in an unseen night-fighter shooting 'A-Apple' down. (Abercromby's attacker was Leutnant Wendelin Breukel of 5./NJG2 flying a Ju 88C-6; his third Abschuss).

On 1 January also Oberleutnant Ludwig 'Luc' Meister, Staffelkapitän I/NGJ4 at Florennes, who had eight victories was promoted to Hauptmann and that night he and his bordfunker Feldwebel Hannes Forke claimed four Lancasters and a Halifax in a period of an hour. It is believed that Lancaster III JA925 on 156 Squadron skippered by 26-year old Squadron Leader Rowland Eden Fawcett DFC was shot down by Meister shortly after they had crossed the French coast at Le Tréport. The 'Lanki' came down eventually four kilometres northwest of Ste-Pol-sur-Mer in the English Channel. All seven of the crew were lost without trace. Squadron Leader Fawcett, from Duncan, British Columbia was a Canadian by birth who had

joined the RAF in the 1930s and was on his third tour having flown 69 operations. In 1941 he had been shot down near Tobruk, in a Lysander, with the Army Co-Operation unit, managing to find his way back to Allied lines.[7] In all, twenty-eight bombers failed to return, 21 of which were destroyed by 'Tame Boars'; two Gruppen of JG 302 that operated over the target claimed another four Viermots, two of which, were later officially confirmed to the single-engined claimants.

On 7 January 'Luc' Meister claimed his first and only day victory when he shot down a B-17 Flying Fortress, which crashed into the Channel. A few days later his Gruppe were moved to Werneuchen to help to defend Berlin. On 20 January Meister and Forke were joined by a third crewmember, Toni Werzinski the bordmeckaniker and bordshütze and the crew shot down two Halifaxes near Celle. Two months later, on 23 March, Meister and Toni Werzinski were badly wounded returning from a sortie in their Bf 110G-4. After shooting down Lancaster DS815 on 514 Squadron near Ste-Omer, Werzinski, who had been working on the aircraft throughout the previous night, fell asleep and failed to spot a P-47 flown by Captain Edward H. Spietsma of the 367th Fighter Squadron, 358th Fighter Group who attacked from behind and sent the 110 down. Werzinski was shot in the head but subsequently survived. Meister managed to crash land at Nannine near Namur, but the three crew were injured and trapped in the aircraft. They crashed near a railway line where two German members of the Reichsbahn, working nearby, saw the crash. They arrived at the crash site quickly and ordered the Belgian workforce to remove the crew to safety. The Bf 110 exploded and the crew were put on a train and taken to Namer Lazarett. Meister was hospitalized until August 1944. When he recovered he returned to Florennes to receive the Ritterkreuz for his victories but was still not fit for flying duties, so he organised the evacuation of the airfield in August 1944. At the end of 1944 Meister was promoted to Kommandeur and took command of III./NJG4. He scored his final Abschuss when he shot down a Lancaster on 7 March 1945 near Kassel.[8]

On the night of Sunday 2nd/Monday 3rd January 1944 383 Lancasters went to Berlin again and 27 bombers were shot down, mainly over the target. Twenty Nachtjäger claimed 23 Lancaster victories this night. Among the claimants were Leutnant Wendelin Breukel of 5./NJG 2 who claimed two destroyed for his 6th and 7th Abschüsse. He was killed on 1 March 1944 when he crashed into the Harrenstedter Forest during a low level transit flight. He had fourteen victories. Oberleutnant Wilhelm Johnen of 5./NJG5 also claimed two, one twenty kilometres southwest of Berlin and the other, seventy kilometres southwest of the capital for his eighth and ninth victories. Leutnant Heinz Oloff of 2./NJG1 claimed his seventh Abschüsse. Oberfeldwebel Heinz Vinke of 11./NJG1 claimed his 38th Abschüsse and Oberleutnant Paul Zorner of 8./NJG3, his 21st, a 'Lanki' near Lückenwalde. Other claimants included 24-year old Unteroffizier Walter Rohlfing of 9./NJG3, a Lancaster ten kilometres NNE of Rheinsburg, for the fifth of his seven Abschüsse. He would survive the war with claims

for eleven Abschüsse. Twenty-three year old Feldwebel Herbert Hubatsch of 5./NJG5 flying a Bf 110G-4 was wounded in action claiming his fifth Abschüsse near Glückstadt. His funker, Unteroffizier Christian Ulrich was killed. Leutnant Robert Wolf claimed his second victory and Oberleutnant Robert Hans Leickhardt of 2./NJG5 claimed his third Abschuss. Leickhardt was killed in action on 5/6 March 1945 when his score had reached thirty Abschüsse. Leutnant Wilhelm Seuss of 11,/NJG5 claimed his first Abschuss. Several other claimants did not survive beyond the spring. Unteroffizier Herbert Ter-Steegen of 10./NJG5 who claimed a victory was killed in a crash on 24 May. Oberfeldwebel Lorenz Gerstmayr who claimed his third victory was killed in action on 29 May 1944. Oberleutnant Manfred Tischtau of Stab (staff flight) III/NJG5 who claimed his fourth victory died in action on 20/21 April at Altenkirchen probably by a Mosquito on 169 Squadron flown by Flight Lieutenant Gordon Cremer and Flying Officer 'Dick' O'Farrell. Feldwebel Gerhardt Doh of 6./NJG2 who claimed his first and only victory was shot down and killed in his Bf 110G-4 on 15/16 March. Oberleutnant Albert Walter of 1./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster ten kilometres south of Potsdam for his sixth and final victory. He was killed on 24/25 February during aerial combat with Halifax LW427 on 420 'Snowy Owl' Squadron RCAF near Egenhausen.[9] Oberst 'Hajo' Herrmann, Kommodore JG300 claimed two victories. Oberfeldwebel Richard Tripke of 1/NJG5 flying a Bf 110 was killed during aerial combat, crashing twenty kilometres northwest of Goritz near Prachenau. He had one victory.

In London on the Monday the Air Ministry announced: 'On Saturday night through to Sunday morning, strong formations of British and Canadian Lancaster bombers carried out an air raid on Berlin, releasing around 1,200 tons of bombs onto the German capital. The operation was shifted to the early morning hours so as to avoid raiding by moonlight. Only isolated German night fighters appeared over Berlin itself during the raid and during the outbound and return flights the bombers were attacked by only a few enemy aircraft, two of which positively were shot down. A German 'aerial defensive rocket' was observed for the first time on this operation. The crews report that the rocket, a horizontal flying missile, appeared suddenly and then exploded in all directions. Only 28 bombers were lost on the night operations, an exceptionally low figure.'

On the night of Wednesday 5th/Thursday 6th January 358 bombers raided Stettin with the loss of sixteen heavies (fifteen of which were destroyed by the Nachtjagd, including at least nine in the greater Stettin area). On the night of 13/14 January when 25 Mosquitoes went to Essen, Duisburg, Aachen and Koblenz, one Mosquito IV (DZ440 HS-F on 109 Squadron) crashed at 0535 hours at Landwehr. Oberleutnant Dietrich 'Dieter' Schmidt, Staffelkapitän, 8./NJG1 and his Bf 110 crew claimed the Abschuss at 0535. It was Schmidt's eleventh victim. Flying Officer P. Y. Stead DFC survived and was taken into captivity. His navigator, Warrant Officer Adam Herd Flett DFM died in the crash. Both men were on their second tour. 'We were delighted' reported Schmidt. 'The 'Mosquito-hunt' had paid off after all. We phoned right away and were informed that our

adversary crashed northwest of Kleve. As far as I knew, this was the fourth fighter Abschuss of a Mosquito at night.' Dietrich Schmidt scored his twelfth Abschüsse on 14/15 January when 498 bombers hit Brunswick and 38 heavies failed to return. He destroyed Lancaster III ND357 on 156 Squadron - which lost five aircraft this night - at 2035 hours. ND357 crashed into farmland near Kolhorn seven kilometres ENE of Schagen in the Netherlands killing the skipper, 31- year old Wing Commander Nelson Reuben Mansfield DFC and seven crew. Thirty-year old Warrant Officer Charles Henry Lawrance DFM was on his second tour having flown more than 46 operations. Twenty-four year old Squadron Leader Edward Sudbury Alexander the Canadian navigator was twice decorated. On the night of 28 April 1942 his Wellington on 419 Squadron of which he was the observer, was attacked and crippled by a night fighter. The rear turret on the aircraft was badly damaged trapping the wounded air gunner inside. Alexander, although wounded himself, picked up an axe, smashed open the turret doors and dragged his rear gunner to safety within the fuselage. For this act of courage he was awarded a DFM. Two years later after completing over fifty operations, many as a Path Finder, he was awarded a DFC. He had carried out 51 sorties against heavily defended targets in Germany and enemy occupied territories, 35 of these since the award of the DFM, eighteen of these on Path Finder Force duties.

On the night of 20/21 January 35 bombers were shot down by the German defences (Nachtjagd claimed 35 victories), which operated the 'Zahme Sau' tactics to excellent advantage and who seemed to have rendered 'Window' counterproductive. But despite all Nachtjagd's continued efforts, the Mosquito continued to fly practically unchallenged over the Reich to the end of the war, by which time Nachtjagd had destroyed only about fifty Mosquitoes, mainly by He 219 and Me 262 jet crews. One of the Mosquito intruder pilots at this time was American 1st Lieutenant James Forrest 'Lou' Luma on 418 Squadron RCAF stationed at Ford, Sussex. Luma carried out his most memorable flight on the night of 21/22 January when 648 bombers attacked Magdeburg. His 17th sortie was the one that entitled him and his navigator Flight Lieutenant Al Eckert to have their first swastika painted on the side of their Mosquito FB.VI when they destroyed a Me 210. There followed an article in the Air Ministry Weekly Intelligence Summary about a Luftwaffe ace by the name of Major Prinz Heinrich zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a highly decorated Luftwaffe night-fighter pilot who was killed in air combat on the night of 21/22 January. The Intelligence Summary went on to say that he had shot down 83 aircraft. It also said he had shot down five RAF aircraft within a few hours of meeting his death. Luma found it interesting that he was the only RAF/RCAF pilot who had shot down an enemy over the Continent that night.

On the night of 20 January Wittgenstein claimed three enemy aircraft shot down in the Berlin area (victories 76- 78). He almost collided with the third burning Lancaster which went into a dive and came very close to his own Ju 88. Feldwebel Friedrich Ostheimer takes up the story: '...I already

had the next aircraft on my screen; almost as a matter of routine we flew up to the target. Prinz Wittgenstein came pretty close to the Lancaster, which was being flown very erratically. On this occasion, too, a burst from 'Schräge Musik' blew a big hole in the wing and started a blazing fire. This time the British pilot reacted unusually: he remained at the controls of his burning machine and dived down on top of us. Our Prinz, too, whipped the Ju 88 into a dive, but the blazing monster came closer and closer and hung in visual contact over our cabin. I had only one thought: 'We've had it!' A heavy blow staggered our aircraft, Prinz Wittgenstein lost control of the machine and we went into a spin, plunging down into the night.'

Wittgenstein recovered control 3000 metres lower and headed for the nearest airfield. Ostheimer established contact with Erfurt. Since the aircraft began stalling after the wheels and flaps went down the crew decided to belly-land the aircraft, which ripped the floor away, sending chopped-up pieces of turf hurtling through the cabin. They discovered that about two metres (6.6 feet) of the wing had been cut off by the Lancaster's propeller and there was a large hole in the rear fuselage. The next night German night-fighter defences destroyed 57 bombers when 648 aircraft of RAF Bomber Command were detailed to bomb Magdeburg. Major Wittgenstein and Ostheimer and bordmechaniker Unteroffizier Kurt Matzuleit took off on a 'Zahme Sau' sortie in Ju 88 R4+XM, which normally was assigned to the Technical Officer of NJG2. In less than forty minutes Wittgenstein shot down three Lancasters and two Halifaxes. At 2200 he made contact with a Lancaster and he shot it down. It was observed to explode at 2205. Between 2210 and 2215 the second Lancaster was shot down.

Observers reported the third Lancaster exploded at approximately 2230, followed shortly by number four, which hit the ground at 2240. During the fifth and final attack, the Viermot was burning when their Ju 88 came under attack, presumably from RAF Mosquitoes. In the attack, their left wing caught fire. Wittgenstein ordered his crew to jump and Ostheimer and Matzuleit parachuted to safety from the damaged aircraft. Next day Wittgenstein's body was found near the wreckage of the Ju 88 in a forest area belonging to the municipality of Lübars by Stendal. Wittgenstein's parachute was discovered unopened and it was deduced that he may have hit his head on the vertical stabiliser of his aircraft when trying to escape. The death certificate listed 'closed fracture of the skull and facial bone' as his cause of death. He was posthumously awarded the 44th Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub und Schwertern) on 23 January. Wittgenstein had flown 320 combat sorties, 150 of which as a bomber pilot or observer. At the time of his death he was the leading night fighter pilot with 83 aerial victories (one more than Major Helmut 'Bubi' 'Boy' Lent); 23 of them claimed on the Eastern and sixty on the Western Front. After his death, only Oberst Lent and Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer were to overtake him with a higher score. On 25 January Heinrich zu Sayn-Wittgenstein's death was announced in the Wehrmachtbericht, an information bulletin issued by the headquarters of the Wehrmacht. He was buried on 29 January in the Geschwader cemetery at the Deelen Air Base. His remains were re-interred

in 1948. He is now resting next to Prinz Egmont zur Lippe-Weissenfeld at Ysselsteyn in the Netherlands.

The question of who shot Wittgenstein down remains unanswered. Friedrich Ostheimer remained convinced that they were shot down by a long range Mosquito night fighter. However, no Mosquito pilot claimed an aerial victory that night. Two 'Serrate' homer-equipped Mosquitoes on 141 Squadron and one on 239 Squadron were on patrol that night. 'Serrate' was designed to home in on the enemy's Lichtenstein radar. It got its name from the picture on the CRT (Cathode Ray Tube), which when within range of a German night-fighter, displayed a herring-bone pattern either side of the time trace, which had a serrated edge. Only Mosquito II DZ303 on 141 Squadron piloted by Pilot Officer Desmond Snape with Flying Officer L. Fowler as his radar operator reported radar contact at 2315 south of Brandenburg. After three to four minutes of pursuit they encountered a Ju 88 with its position lights on. They attacked and believed to have damaged it behind its cockpit, but they did not claim a victory. This encounter exactly matches the time and area in which Sayn-Wittgenstein was killed.

Another leading Experten, 24-year old Eichenlaubträger Hauptmann Manfred Meurer, Kommandeur I/NJG1 and his Funker, Ritterkreuzträger Oberfeldwebel Gerhard Scheibe in He 219A-0 'Owl' G9+BB most probably collided with W4852 LS-B flown by Flight Sergeant Robert Butler; one of the 22 Lancasters that failed to return. Meurer and Schiebe had just shot down a Halifax and a Lancaster to take the Experten's score to 65 Nachtagschüsse (including forty Viermots and two Mosquitoes) in less than two years in 130 sorties. When Robert Butler had come under attack and if the rear gunner saw their attacker, in all probability he followed his brother's advice. Sydney Butler was a Halifax flight engineer and during leave together the previous Christmas when asked by his brother what was the best way to shake off a fighter on his tail, he had told him to cut the throttles on his port wing, descend 2,000 feet weaving as he went and then pull up again before the Lancaster plummeted, so it is entirely possible that 'B-Baker' collided with the fighter and they came down locked together. Meurer and his funker and Bob Butler's crew crashed to their deaths twenty kilometres east of Magdeburg. Meurer was succeeded by 42-year old Hauptmann Paul Förster, who had six night victories prior to being named Kommandeur of I./NJG1, with which he added two more victories while flying the He 219. On the evening of 1 October 1944 Major Förster, Stab NJG1 and his bordfunker Oberleutnant Fritz Apel who were testing a new instrument landing system, were killed in He 219A-0 G9+CL in a landing accident at Münster/Handorf airfield.

On the night of 27/28 January Werner Baake, recently appointed Staffelkapitän of 2./NJG1, shot down a Lancaster over the Urft Dam to record his 24th victory. However, Baake's Bf 110 G-4 (G9+ML) had been hit by return fire in this engagement. He and his crew bailed out before the aircraft crashed at Uftalsperre, near Gemünd. Baake survived unharmed (and was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 27 July for 33 victories) but his bordfunker Unteroffizier Waldbauer was killed.

A maximum effort had been ordered on Berlin by 677 bombers on the night of 28/29 January and a full range of diversionary operations was put into operation. Eighteen 'Oboe' Mosquitoes raided four of the most significant Nachtjagd airfields in Holland and 63 Stirlings and four Path Finder Halifaxes dropped mines in Kiel Bay five hours before the Main Force raid on the 'Big City'. Six more Mosquitoes bombed Berlin four hours before the main attack went in and another four Mosquitoes made a diversionary raid on Hannover. Part of the German night fighter force was drawn up by the early diversions and the bomber approach route over Northern Denmark proved too distant for some of the other German fighters. The JLO however, was able to concentrate his fighters over the target and many aircraft were shot down there. Two Lancaster IIIs on 83 Squadron failed to return to Wyton. 'S- Sugar' flown by Flight Lieutenant Horace Robert Hyde was involved in a fatal collision with a 463 Squadron RAAF Lancaster outbound and crashed on the Danish border. Both crews were buried in Aabenraa Cemetery on 2 February. While outbound 'B-Baker' flown by Pilot Officer William Simpson was attacked by a Ju 88G-6 night fighter of II./NJG3 crewed by 23-year old Hauptmann Gerhard Raht, his funker Feldwebel Anton Heinemann and bordmechaniker Unteroffizier Werner Hesse and controlled by the radar station 'Stern' ('Star') at Lütjenhorn in Northern Germany. At 0237 the Lancaster exploded in the air and the wreckage was spread over a radius of 2½ kilometres just north of the village of Varnæs. During the morning the surviving flyers began to show up. There were reports of parachutes found at Tråsbøl, Brobøl, Ullerup and Bovrup. Sergeant Thomas K. McCash the flight engineer and Flight Sergeant John J. Martin, navigator, were found dead in fields near Bovrup. One was not wearing a parachute. McCash and Martin were both laid to rest in Aabenraa cemetery on 2 February. Pilot Officer Ronald Pilgrim the air bomber landed near Ullerup and hid in a shack belonging to the Vicarage before he was picked up. Air gunner Flight Sergeant John R. Tree RAAF had landed in the sea off Alssund and drowned. He was found on 19 June and was laid to rest on 22 June. Pilgrim and Simpson and the W/Op, Sergeant W. Livesey and the air gunner, Flight Sergeant J. A. Fell, were sent to Dulag Luft and on to PoW camps. In all, 46 aircraft were lost on Berlin.

On 30/31 January Berlin was attacked again, this time by a force of 534 aircraft. Thirty-three bombers were shot down, all of them by twin-engined 'Tame Boars'. Lancaster I DV303 on 101 Squadron at Ludford Magna skippered by 23-year old Flight Sergeant Douglas William Froggatt is thought to have probably been shot down by Oberleutnant Josef Kraft of 4./NJG5 with the aircraft crashing at around 2000 hours in the Alexanderhof area of Berlin. Froggatt and four of the crew, including Flying Officer Moie Marder RCAF the special operator born in Regina, were laid to rest at the Berlin War Cemetery.[10] The three others were taken into captivity.

Pilot Officer Edgar Jones RCAF the skipper of one of several Lancasters on 103 Squadron on the crew's fourth journey to the 'Big City'. On its way to Berlin a hail of bullets suddenly erupted through the floor of the fuselage

close behind the tail turret. The mid-upper gunner saw the dark shape of an FW 190 streak away upwards as it passed by. There had been no warning of an approaching night-fighter nor had they been caught by searchlights. The damage suffered was extensive. The starboard tail fin and tail plane were riddled with holes and effectively useless. The tail turret was jammed solid and one of the bomb bay doors had been shot away. As the mid-upper gunner watched, the German fighter turned gracefully and came diving down to attack again. Jones threw the heavy bomber into a turning dive, but the German managed to hit the starboard wing and put one engine out of action. A third attack took place a few minutes later, but this time the German missed the bomber and dived away to be seen no more. Realising that the bomber would be unable to reach Berlin and return, Jones coolly flew his aircraft towards the known location of some heavy flak batteries and bombed them instead. He then turned for home, nursing the aircraft through the skies across the North Sea to return to base. He was awarded a DFC for his actions and on 24 February he and his crew were back over Germany, this time attacking Schweinfurt. Jones and his crew continued to bomb Germany until they had completed 27 raids, when they were taken off operational duties and sent to training stations. All of them survived the war.[11]

The Bf 110 of Oberfeldwebel Hallenbruch of I/NJG1 took off from Venlo. His bordfunker, Unteroffizier Hermann Vollert described what happened to them near beacon 'Quelle' ['Spring']. 'We thought that we were off too late to catch the bombers but we picked up a contact on radar; it was ten to thirteen kilometres away. I guided the pilot on to it. We thought it was a bomber but we were surprised to see that it only had two engines when we came into visual contact. We had strict orders not to attack any twin-engined aircraft unless we were absolutely sure that it was an enemy. We argued about it. I thought it was a Beaufighter because it had a thicker fuselage than a Junkers 88, but the pilot thought it was a Junkers 88. He said it's another arme Sau - another 'poor devil' - like us.

'We were behind it for about two minutes, discussing all this. We decided to turn away and leave it alone. We did so and were flying back to Venlo when, a few minutes later, possibly five minutes, we were suddenly attacked. He hit us in the right wing, between the engine and the fuselage; the whole wing broke off. I tried to get rid of the cockpit cover at my end and managed to do so. The plane was spinning and I kept being pushed into the back end of the cabin. I could hardly get my arm over the edge of the cabin but I knew that I mustn't give up. I tried again and again and got out in the end. I opened the parachute at once because I believed we were over the sea and that the strong west wind that was blowing would carry me nearer to the coast, but I came down in the water about two kilometres off shore. I was lucky; the water was so shallow that I could stand up. The aircraft came down about ten kilometres out at sea. I don't know what happened to the pilot; they only found a hand and part of his body.'[12]

Flight Lieutenant Graham James Rice and his 'Serrate' operator, Flying Officer James Gibson Rogerson on 141 Squadron claimed a Bf 110

destroyed. Rogerson, born in Leeds in 1922 and educated at Ingledew College, Roundhay and Worksop College, recalled: 'Our aircraft obtained a visual at 600 feet and opened fire in a 5-6 second burst. The enemy aircraft's port engine burst into flames and it reared up and blew up, parts of it flying past our aircraft, which pulled out of the way. We watched it spiral down in flames with thick black smoke pouring out and crew saw a dull reflection through cloud where it had crashed. It is claimed as one Me 110 destroyed.'

Two Mosquitoes were put up by 169 Squadron, including 'P-Pluto' flown by 'B' Flight Commander Squadron Leader Joe Cooper and Flight Lieutenant Ralph Connolly. Cooper recalls: 'I had to orbit fifty miles from Berlin on one of the German beacons. We tootled along and just got into position when I picked up a blip in front of me. He was orbiting slowly Turning down the gunsight I could see the shape. There was no moon and it was very, very, dark. I got into position, slightly below and astern, went up to him and gave him the treatment; cannon - a lot of cannon. We were at about 25,000 feet. He was a complete flamer. Actually I gave him a bit more. 'That's for Coventry', I said. But I got in too close. I was mesmerized by it all. Rafe said, 'Look out Joe, you're going to hit the bastard.' I pulled the 'pole' back hard and the result was I stalled and went into a spin. We were not allowed to spin or acrobat the Mosquito because of our long-range belly tanks, which moved the centre of gravity of the aircraft. I put on the usual drill: full opposite rudder, stick forward. I'd done this before but never in a Mossie. Went straight into a spin the other way! I went into the spin about five times, heading for the ground all the while. During the spins I could see this 110 out of the corner of my eye; most extraordinary!

'One's thoughts were; what a bloody shame. This is going to be the first Hun the Squadron's got and I won't be there to tell the boys. I wonder who's going to hit the ground first, him or me? What a bloody shame the boys aren't going to know I told Rafe, 'Bail out. We've had it!' He had an observer-type parachute under his seat. In the spin he couldn't bend down to pick it up! He took his helmet off and put it on again. I said, 'Get out!'

'Rafe replied, 'If you can get us out of this spin, I could!'

'I thought, 'I'll try something else.' I centralized the pole and the rudder and eased it out of the dive. At 7,000 feet I straightened up. I had not been frightened but boy was I frightened now. Our radar blew up in the spin. I said to Ralph 'You can kneel and look backwards and keep an eye out for the Huns!' We had light flak all the way back to the coast. Approaching Snoring I called up the tower 'Is Squadron Leader Ted Thorne in the tower?' I asked. 'Yes,' they said. I said, 'Tell him he owes me ten bob.' (I had bet Ted ten shillings I would get a Hun before him!) Ted took the camp Tannoy - it was one in the morning - and announced, 'For your information everybody Squadron Leader Cooper is coming into land and he's got the first Hun!' When I landed there were 300 airmen and WAAFs around 'P-Pluto'! Most extraordinary! I gave them a little talk and off we went.' Cooper and Connolly's victim was Bf 110G-4 D5+LB of Stab III/NJG3, which crashed at Werneuchen, twenty kilometres East of Berlin.

Oberleutnant Karl Löeffelmann, pilot (with one night kill) was killed. Feldwebel Karl Bareiss, bordfunker and Oberfeldwebel Oscar Bickert, bordschütze (both wounded in action) bailed out.

The month ended with the Nachtjagd scoring an all-time monthly record of 308 Bomber Command aircraft shot down. I Jagdkorps claimed at least 223 victories (including 114 during the three Berlin raids 29 January - 1 February) but lost 55 aircraft and crews during January 1944. Losses had reduced the front-line strength to 179 operational aircraft and crews by 31 January. It was clear that new British tactics and new countermeasures would be necessary before a resumption of raids deep into Germany and the Reich defences too, were in need of an overhaul.

On 30 January the first move to effect closer liaison between Luftwaffenbefehlshaber Mitte and the operational side of the Air Defence of the Reich saw the creation of Luftflotte Reich. Generaloberst Hubert Weise was relieved from his flak command of Air Defence of the Reich and replaced by Generaloberst Hans-Jurgen Stumpff who had previously commanded Luftflotte 5 in Norway and Finland. His new command was now responsible for all day and night fighter aircraft and all anti-aircraft regiments. These changes were part of a belated attempt to reverse the decline of the defence of the Reich, which, after the situation created at the end of 1943 by the Bomber Commands of the RAF and USAAF, could no longer be ignored. Göring had opposed improvement but the Allied air forces had forced a number of changes to be adopted. Changes too were made in the flak units and the Aircraft Reporting Service, the former being considerably strengthened by increasing armament and bigger batteries. The entire direction of Air Defence rested, as far as command was concerned, with Luftflotte Kommando Reich.[13] I Jagdkorps directed the operations of day and night fighter formations, as well as the establishment and training of fighter units and their technical equipment. The night fighter control was improved by the extension of the 'Y' system. The day fighter formations were appreciably strengthened numerically and improved types of aircraft were introduced.

Endnotes Chapter 1

1 *Horrido!* by Colonel Raymond F. Toliver and Trevor J. Constable (Bantam 1968).
2 Quoted in *Horrido!* by Colonel Raymond F. Toliver and Trevor J. Constable (Bantam 1968). In July 1943 Falck was promoted to Oberst and transferred to the Generalstab as Kammhuber's representative at the Luftwaffenführungsstab. Falck was then sent to Berlin and appointed within the Luftwaffenbefehlshaber Mitte, as overall responsible for the day and night fighter defence of the Reich.
3 Oberfeldwebel Paul Mahle, an armourer attached to II./NJG5 at Parchim, had built his own working prototype of 'Schräge Musik', which was soon fitted to all of the Gruppe's aircraft. Schräge Musik' comprised two 20mm MG FF or a twin 30mm MK 108 cannon installation mounted behind the rear cockpit bulkhead of the Bf 110 and Ju 88 night fighters and was arranged to fire forwards and upwards at an angle of between 70° and 80°. Fighter pilots whose aircraft were fitted with 'Schräge Musik' did not need to attack 'von unten hinten' ('underneath, behind'). They could attack from the blind spot underneath the bomber with cannon raked at 15°, fired by the pilot using a Revi C/12D reflector sight. An attack by a 'Schräge Musik'-equipped night fighter typically came as a complete surprise to the bomber crew, who only realised a night-fighter was close by when they came under fire.
4 *Bombers First and Last* by Gordon Thorburn.
5 *Lancaster To Berlin* by Walter Thompson DFC and Bar.(Goodhall 1985).
6 Quoted in *83 Squadron 1917-1969* by Ron Low and Frank Harper (Compaid Graphics, 1992).
7 Pilot Officer Robert Lyford DFC, the 21-year old navigator, had joined up on the same day as his twin brother Francis. Flight Sergeant Francis Phillip Lyford was killed on Trossy on 3 August 1944. Kracker Archive.
8 Ludwig Meister maintained contact with his two crew members. Werzinski had recovered from the bullet wound to the head and Hannes Forke, whilst on a holiday at Alkmaar on the coast of the Netherlands in the 1960s, tried to save his daughter and nephew from drowning, but died with them.
9 The Halifax was skippered by Flying Officer Henry Maynard Long RCAF. All seven crew were killed.
10 His brother, Flying Officer Ben Marder RCAF was killed in action 30 January 1944 on Lancaster I DV303 SR-U over Berlin at Teltow, 16 kilometres southwest of Berlin.
11 *Heroes of Bomber Command: Lincolnshire by Rupert Matthews* (Countryside Books 2005).
12 Quoted in *The Berlin Raids* by Martin Middlebrook. (Cassell 1988)
13 At the beginning of April 1944 the staff of Luftflotten-Kommando moved to Berlin-Wannsee to the newly extended Battle HQ (formerly the Reichsluftschutzschule).

Chapter 2

Viktor! Viktor!

For the first time since war began, several press representatives have been admitted to the great Hall of Operations where strategic planning of the air offensive against German industrial targets is carried on. The walls are covered with the giant maps of 50 German industrial cities which now are targets or will be targets during the coming weeks; these are cities which the Allied commanders believe are of special significance in the present stage of the air offensive. Every map includes a table listing the tonnage of bombs already dropped on the city and the total weight of blast and incendiary bombs thought to be necessary permanently to destroy the target. Special maps are also provided for each city which give precise aerial-photographic data about the destroyed zones and the progress of German clean-up operations.

Reuters News Agency report, 31 January 1944, London

'Night-fighting' recalled 29-year old Oberleutnant Helmuth Schulte, Technical Officer of II./NJG5, 'was not enjoyable'. It was a most bitter experience that broke many nerves and had few survivors. We had to withstand much anxiety. This was due less to the fighting itself, which took place in the dark and in which we had a better chance, than to the need to fly in bad weather in conditions under which normally no man would set foot in an aircraft. Night-fighting was nerve-wracking; and the few who survived it had, above all things, flying skill and occasional luck. Night-fighting in anger, inspired by a feeling of hate or because a comrade had been killed in a bombing raid was not possible. In order to have any success and to stay alive it was essential that experience and concentration should be the first qualities in the flying, though it is true that the swashbuckling touch was often necessary as well. What was most important was to find the in-flying bomber stream - and in this the carefully-worked-out flight plan was vital. But very often it could only be worked out after take-off and even then it had to be altered. Also the business of getting the bomber into one's sights was often tedious. We sat well down under the bomber and then climbed slowly until we were within fifty to a hundred metres of it. Then I lined up and aimed between the two starboard engines. At the instant that I fired I would bank away to the left. Thus all the shots went from below into the fuel tanks of the bomber, which usually burst into flames immediately. Because we usually came from low down and from astern, we were rarely spotted by the British air-gunners and attracted no defensive fire. Being lower than the bomber, we could keep with it and observe it against the background of the night sky. If we managed to catch the head of the bomber stream, we used to hold back in order to more easily shoot down the waves of aircraft following.'

Schulte, a former Wehrmacht observation pilot, who had scored his 21st victory, a B-17 in the Magdeburg- Fallersleben area on 11 January - destroyed three Viermots in the greater Berlin area for his 5th-7th confirmed kills on the night of the 15/16th February 1944. Nachtjagd, which deployed 143 crews against a raid on Berlin by 891 aircraft, claimed 39 victories, mainly over the Reich capital for the loss of eleven night fighters. Three kilometres southeast of Ribuitz Oberleutnant Paul Zorner of 8./NJG3 shot down Lancaster I ME636 on 166 Squadron piloted by Warrant Officer George Arthur Woodcock-Stevens for his 26th Abschuss. The 'Lanki' crashed near Jabel with the loss of all seven crew. Zorner survived the crash of his Bf 110G-4 on 25 July 1944 after an engine fire and he emerged unscathed after being shot down during combat near Cloppenburgh on 17 April. He rapidly increased his score and on 11 June shot down four '4-mots' in the Dreux area. He would finish the war with 59 Abschüsse.

On 20 February 1944 the Americans launched 'Big Week'. Bomber Command and the USAAF dropped 19,000 tons of bombs on the Reich in a true round the clock offensive but losses were high with 224 American and 157 British bombers failing to return in just one week of sustained operations. The Leipzig raid of 19/20 February cost Bomber Command 82 Lancasters and Halifaxes and one Mosquito on 692 Squadron; its worst casualties so far. The majority was destroyed by a very efficiently deployed 'Tame Boar' operation involving 2,941 Jagdkorps sorties (seventeen of which were lost). Feldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3 destroyed five Lancasters to take his score to 34 kills. Most, if not all of Frank's victories, were with Hans-Georg Schierholz. Oberleutnant Martin 'Tino' Becker, Staffelkapitän, 2./NJG6 aided by his bordfunker Unteroffizier Karl-Ludwig Johanssen claimed two Halifaxes and two Lancasters to take his score to ten victories. Becker's Gruppe, I./NJG6 claimed eight victories.

Lancaster III JB526 'D-Dog' on 57 Squadron flown by Johnny Ludford had a close encounter with a Ju 88, which 18-year old Pilot Officer Maurice Stoneman, flight engineer, describes: 'The skipper and I used to go out to our aircraft and, blindfolded, we would identify each control switch button, etc. Still blindfolded we would practice such things as closing down an engine and feathering the airscrew and other routines. This paid dividends on more than one occasion, in particular on this Leipzig raid. We were attacked by a Ju 88, our mid-upper Frank Fox saw him at the last minute and shouted 'Dive starboard GO.' We did just that. As I was standing up with my seat retracted I was thrown to the side but managed to recover by grabbing the small 'Window' handle. We were however, hit in the starboard engine and also lost three inches of a propeller blade. This of course caused great vibration but unfortunately I was looking at the engine at the time of impact and the flash of the impact temporarily blinded me. The skipper ordered me to 'Feather starboard inner'. I did and the 'blindfold practice' paid off. I also pressed the fire extinguisher button. I was still unable to see properly but was beginning to recover my eyesight and vision. The fire was put out but the feathering mechanism was damaged and the propeller had

to 'windmill'. This was a good thing as the engine drove the mid-upper turret hydraulics and one of the two generators. We also lost certain hydraulics and collected a large gash on the starboard side just above the main wing, which at 20,000 feet and in that temperature were more than uncomfortable. We went into a dive and lost 10,000 feet and only managed to pull out of it by the skipper and me with our feet on the instrument panel and hauling like hell on the stick. We got back to East Kirkby with difficulty. During thirty ops I only had to feather an engine once through malfunction and during many a ten hour trip the engines did not miss a beat. You just have to love the Merlin and also the rugged build of the Lancaster.'

Also on 19/20 February Allied countermeasures gained new impetus when a 'Spoof' attack was carried out over the North Sea by a OTU force while 816 bombers attacked Leipzig. The main disadvantage of the 'Spoof' was that the aircraft had to turn back before reaching the enemy coast, thus reducing the period during which they appeared a threat to the enemy. (On 23 July the addition of a small force of special 'Window' aircraft, which flew with the OTU aircraft but carried on when the Spoof Force turned back, solved this weakness). The 'spoof raids met with limited success, while the Germans reported that about '100' (RAF figures are 19) Intruder attacks on airfields at Gilze Rijen, Deelen and Venlo caused only minor damage. A Mosquito 'Spoof' attack on Berlin kept German fighters back but another on Dresden, failed. Pursuit Night fighting procedure by SN-2 was an essential factor in the heavy losses meted out by I Jagdkorps this night. They were also helped significantly by plotting accurately the H_2S bearings and gauging correctly the significance of a turn in the sea area north-west of Terschelling by the main force while 49 minelayers continued the original course due east (they dropped their mines in Kiel Bay). Altogether, 294 twin-engined and single-engined fighters were sent against the bomber stream. The RAF lost 44 Lancasters and 34 Halifaxes, with approximately twenty of the 78 bombers shot down by flak and four aircraft destroyed in collisions while the Nachtjagd lost just seventeen fighters. Leutnant Otto Keller of 9./NJG5 claimed his first kills when he shot down three Halifaxes. The first, at 0312 hours, was Halifax V LK993 on 429 'Bison' Squadron flown by 25-year old Flight Lieutenant Jack Bowen RAFVR, shot down 6000 metres over Gardelegen with the loss of his crew. Pilot Officer Clifford Murray RCAF the 26-year old 'second dickie' was killed also. Keller ended the war with fifteen Abschüsse.

An attack on Stuttgart on 20/21 February by 598 bombers was outstandingly successful. This was due mainly to the North Sea sweep and a diversionary feint towards Munich, which successfully drew the German fighters up two hours before the main force flew inland. Nine bombers only were lost (All were shot down by night fighters. Four other Lancasters and a Halifax crashed in England on their return). Two further effective 'Tame Boar' operations were directed against Bomber Command raids before February 1944 was out. On the 24/25th 209 First Jagdkorps 'Tame Boar' crews destroyed 31 Lancasters and Halifaxes of a 734 strong force raiding Schweinfurt (Bomber Command lost 33 aircraft). I./NJG6 claimed a

Lancaster and a Halifax destroyed but NJG6 lost five Bf 110s and four crewmen in air combat. Oberfeldwebel Fritz Schellwat of 6./NJG1 downed a Lancaster south-east of Saverne at 2222 hours for his seventeenth victory and Hauptmann Eckart-Wilhelm 'Hugo' von Bonin, Ritterkreuzträger and Kommandeur of II./NJG1 destroyed two Viermots for his 28th-29th kills. One of his victims was Lancaster III JB721 GT-F on 156 Squadron at Warboys over Briey, eastern France with the loss of five crew. The skipper, Flight Lieutenant J. A. Day DFC and his flight engineer, survived to be taken prisoner. Three 'Lanki's' on 156 Squadron failed to return from Schweinfurt.

The next night, 25/26 February, 165 twin-engined 'Tame Boars' claimed nineteen heavies during an outstandingly accurate and successful raid in clear weather conditions and very light flak defences on the M.A.N. works at Augsburg. The Path Finders ground marking was very accurate and 2,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the target area. 2,920 houses were destroyed and another 5,000 were damaged resulting in over 85,000 bombed out of their homes. Much of the city was destroyed including sixteen churches and eleven hospitals. Over 700 people were killed on the ground and another 2,500 people were injured in what the Germans described as 'extreme example of terror bombing'. Damage on the second wave caused considerable damage to an important aircraft component factory and also to some former paper and cotton mills that had been taken over by the M.A.N, engineering company. Seven crews of I./NJG6 operating from Mainz-Finthen claimed eight kills; four other bombers were lost in collisions and three were probably lost to flak.

Halifax III LV794 on 78 Squadron skippered by Flight Lieutenant William Maurice Carruthers was among the missing as the navigator, Flight Sergeant Arthur Collins, recalled: 'We were returning to RAF Breighton from a successful op when suddenly we were fired upon by a German night fighter [at 6500 metres at 0020 hours]. Our aircraft took a direct hit and the aircraft exploded I was blown out the aircraft and about 300 yards above a small wooded area I regained my conscious and pulled the rip cord and heavily landed in tree hanging just above the ground. My leg was badly wounded with shrapnel. The rear gunner cut the chute down and lifted me to the ground and then carried me to a road on the outskirts of a small village. At dawn I was found by a farmer who placed me in a wheelbarrow and took me to a convent hospital nearby where I underwent surgery on my leg. The following day I was visited in hospital by the pilot of the night fighter. It transpired he was the pilot of a Ju 88 and his name was Major Günther Radusch of Stab/NJG2. To my surprise he spoke perfect English and explained he had studied at Oxford University before the war. He expressed his regrets at the loss of my aircraft and crew and left me with a supply of cigarettes and chocolate. When I was fully recovered I was transferred to a PoW camp. I was returned to the UK on the *Arundel Castle*, a hospital ship, from Marseille in March 1945. I discovered that my aircraft was shot down near the village of Fischbach bei Dahn, Rheinland-Pfalzer.'[14] Oberst Radusch would survive the war with 64 Nachtjagd

victories (including 57 Viermots). Total Nachtjagd claims for February were 183 bombers destroyed. I Jagdkorps casualties amounted to fourteen aircraft and crews during the 24/25 and 25/26 February operations.

February 1944 had been an auspicious month for 418 Squadron RCAF, which scored nine confirmed victories, two of them by 1st Lieutenant 'Lou' Luma, pilot of Mosquito FB.VI *Sweet Moonbeam McSwine*. On 13 February Luma scored his second victory when he and Flying Officer Colin 'Fin' Finlayson destroyed a He 177 over Bordeaux, France. On 6 March Luma and Finlayson got a FW 190 over Pau, France and achieved ace status on 20 March. Luma and Finlayson and Flight Lieutenant Donald Aikins MacFadyen a native of Montreal and 'Pinky' Wright flew a long-range Ranger[15] over France. Luma and Finlayson attacked Luxeuil airfield, where they shot down a Ju W34 liaison aircraft and a Ju 52/3m transport and damaged two Gotha Go 242 glider transports and two Bf 109s on the ground, while MacFadyen and Wright shot down a Bü 141, which was coming into land. Moving on to Hagenau airfield, MacFadyen proceeded to destroy nine Go 242s and a Do 217 on the ground.

Luma flew his final RCAF sortie on 418 Squadron on the night of 30 April 1944. He then transferred to the 8th Air Force and flew a Mosquito weather plane until in November 1944 he rotated to the USA. Finlayson was killed on 18 October 1944 when he and his pilot, 24-year old Flight Lieutenant Stanley Herbert Ross Cotterill DFC RCAF were returning to England from Italy after landing there at the end of a 'Day Ranger' to the Vienna area on the 17th.

In RAF Main Force meanwhile, the first half of March 1944 was relatively quiet. Bomber Command's first heavy raid of the month was directed against Stuttgart on 15/16 March. In an attempt to avoid contact with night-fighters the 863 bombers that were dispatched split into two parts, flying a roundabout route over France nearly as far as the Swiss frontier before turning north-east to approach Stuttgart.[16] This deception worked until just before the force reached the target when 93 1 Jagddivision crews were fed into the bomber stream and they returned with claims for thirty kills for the loss of nine aircraft and crews. An hour before reaching Stuttgart Lancaster 'F for Freddie' on 57 Squadron at East Kirkby was attacked by 26-year old Leutnant Herbert Koch of 11./NJG3. He set all four engines on fire and Pilot Officer Sam Atcheson DFC ordered all his crew to bail out once they had crossed into Switzerland but only one of the gunners made it before the Lancaster crashed at Saignelegier. It was Koch's ninth Abschüsse.

Homebound and flying at 20,000 feet south-west of Strasbourg Halifax 'D-Dog' on 466 Squadron RAAF at Leconfield was attacked by Hauptmann Heinz Reschke Staffelkapitän III/NJG6 who set a fuel tank and some oxygen supply bottles on fire. Despite the imminent risk of an explosion, Pilot Officer Harold Callaway Wills RAAF of Strathfield, NSW held the blazing Halifax steady while his crew bailed out and by the time he made his own exit, the flames had burnt him about the face and hands. Upon being captured he was taken to hospital in Strasbourg for treatment. Reschke and Unteroffizier Josef Fischer were killed on 24/25 April when

their Bf 110G-4 collided with another Bf 110G-4 whilst returning to Illescheim from an operational sortie. Gefreiter Werner Hohn the air gunner was injured. Reschke had six confirmed night Abschüsse. Halifax 'S-Sugar' on 578 Squadron was shot down by 23-year old Leutnant Helmut Bunje and his funker, Unteroffizier Alfred Weimann of 4./NJG6 flying a Bf 110G-4 which took the Squadron's losses on the night to three. The Abschuss was the first of Bunje's twelve wartime victories. Flight Sergeant John Douglas Lyon and three of the crew were killed. Sergeant D. J. Salt was gravely wounded and would most likely have died but for three young German girls who found him lying in deep snow and insisted that he was given first aid.[17]

Fifty kilometres southwest of Strasbourg 23-year old Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker, since 15 December 1942 Staffelkapitän of I./NJG2, peered out of the cockpit windscreen of his heavily armed Ju 88R-2 night fighter, scanning the sky for the sight of a Viermot. Born on 20 October 1920 in Oldenburg, Rökker joined the Luftwaffe in October 1939 and completed flight training with Flieger Ausbildungs Regiment 22 at Güstrow, Blindflugschule 5 at Belgrade-Semlin and Nachtjagdschule 1 at Neubiberg near München before being joining 1./NJG2 in the Mediterranean. He shot down a Bristol Beaufort on 20 June 1942 while transiting from Catania to Kalamaki in Greece. His aircraft received 25 hits from return fire during the action, but he landed safely at Kalamaki. From airfields in Libya, Rökker flew deep penetration 'intruder' sorties over Egypt, claiming four Wellington bombers destroyed. Although in August 1942 1./NJG2 was briefly relocated to Belgium, the Staffel relocated to the Mediterranean theatre, to Sicily, on 16 February 1943. Rökker undertook night fighter sorties over Sicily and Tunisia, claiming a Wellington near Marsalla on the night of 19/20 April to record his sixth victory. On 2 July I./NJG2 were back in Europe to undertake Reichsverteidigung duties. This keen exponent of 'Fernnachtjagd' operations destroyed his first '4-mot' on 23/24 August 1943 when he shot down a Lancaster twenty kilometres southwest of Berlin for his seventh victory. Having served in I./NJG2 for almost two years, he was hungry for more victories.

Endnotes Chapter 2

14 Carruthers and Flight Sergeants Ian Bell the flight engineer and Clive Warren Sisley RAAF, one of the air gunners, were killed. The air bomber and two other gunners were also taken into captivity.

15 Operation to engage air and ground targets within a wide but specified area.

16 *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational reference book 1939-1945* Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt (Midland 1985).

17 *RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War Vol 5 1944*, by W R Chorley (Midland Publishing 1997). Salt was later repatriated aboard the *Arundel Castle*, reaching Liverpool on 6 February 1945.

Chapter 3

Pauke-Pauke!

Ist die Lufischlacht in der Steige
Und die Nacht, die drohnt und lamt wie dumm.
Pauke! Pauke! Rums die Geige!
***Das Lied von der, 'Wilden Sau'* by Peter Holm**

Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker listened impatiently but attentively to the long litany of instructions from his 23-year old bordfunker Carlos Nugent crouched in the cockpit of their Junkers as they continued their night chase across the countryside to their designated 'Himmelbett' Räume or 'four poster bed' box near Aschaffenburg. The clock was approaching 2230 hours on the night of 15/16 March 1944. Flying Ju 88 R4+BB they had taken off from Ste-Dizier at around 2115 hours before heading for Bietigheim 30-50 kilometres west of Stuttgart. Rökker scurried into action, Nugent making sure that the FuG 217 'Neptun R' tail warning radar was clear. The last thing they wanted was a dreaded Moskito on their tail. Telefunken FuG 350 'Naxos Z' passive radar equipment, which some of the Ju 88R-1s and 2s carried, homing onto H_2S equipment and Siemens FuG 227 'Flensburg' homing onto the 'Monica' tail-warning device might have identified Rökker's victim. Or the plot could have come from the Jägerleitoffizier in his 'Battle Opera House' who would announce 'Kuriere in sight'. Suddenly, in the earphones of Rökker's bordfunker was sounded the Jägerleitoffizier's announcement.

'Have Kurier for you, Kirchturm [Church Tower'] 8 (8000 metres), course 300°, Kurier flying from East to West.'

Rökker and his bordfunker reacted with excitement and enthusiasm. According to the information from the Jägerleitoffizier they were only a few kilometres behind a 'Dicke Auto' ('Fat Car'), which had been picked up on Würzburg ground radar, fixed on the plotting table and transmitted to the Oberleutnant and his crew stalking the bomber. It was a Lancaster. Rökker's bordfunker picked up contact on his Lichtenstein radar set and he transmitted 'Emil-Emil' to alert his Jägerleitoffizier (JLO, or GCI-controller). The Oberleutnant throttled back the two 1,700hp BMW 801D engines, approached stealthily from below and behind and then he opened fire. His guns recoiled. The Lancaster never stood a chance. 'Horrido!' exclaimed Rökker over R/T to ground control to announce his first success of the night. Five minutes later the Jägerleitoffizier alerted Rökker's bordfunker that he had another Kuriere west of Hagenau. It was another Lancaster. 'Pauke! Pauke!' ('Kettledrums! Kettledrums!') Rökker announced. He was going into the attack.

'1000 metres, 800 metres, 500, 400, 300 metres!' Power off and minimum speed in order not to overtake him, Rökker once again attacked 'von hinten unten'. Small, bluish exhaust flames made it easier to keep the target in sight. Four engines, twin tail, were recorded almost subconsciously. No sudden movement that might attract the tail gunner's attention. Calm now! Guns armed? Night sight switched on? Rökker could see that it was a Lancaster. He applied a little more power to the two BMW engines, approached cautiously and in the classic 'von hinten unten' tactic, blew the bomber to pieces at about 100 metres' range.

Cries of 'Horrido!' filled the airwaves once again.

Rökker had not yet finished his night's sortie. Thirty-five to forty kilometres west of Stuttgart he obtained visual contact of what he thought was a Halifax but it was a Lancaster, a 9 Squadron aircraft piloted by Squadron Leader R. Backwell-Smith. Carlos Nugent immediately transmitted 'Ich beruhe'. Then they closed in rapidly from behind and below for the kill. The equipment was checked and the machine guns and MG-151 2cm cannon were loaded and cocked. At the funker's feet were ammunition drums with 75 rounds each for the pair of deadly cannon but Rökker again decided to use his front guns and approach 'von hinten unten' once more. If he had been out of ammunition, he would have given his bordschütze free range with his two MG-151 cannon. Changing ammunition drums in a twisting and turning night fighter would have made his task almost impossible but not if he pulled alongside to allow the bordschütze to blaze away.

'250, 200, 150 metres'. A slipstream shook the Junkers. They were close! At 100 metres Rökker pressed the gun button on the stick and the cannons rattled. He saw hits but the Lancaster did not catch fire. Backwell-Smith pushed the bomber into a nose-dive and then climbed before turning sharply to port losing height, as he knew the RAF pilots were trained to do in the aptly named corkscrew, which was a successful defensive tactic. In pursuit of him Rökker attacked the fuselage with and hit the aircraft again but he could not see any flames. Flight Sergeant Eric Birrell the 21-year old Australian rear gunner did not shoot back, so either he had been killed in the first attack or he or his hydraulics had been disabled and he could no longer turn the heavy guns. Before he too was killed, Sergeant Brian Glover the 19-year old mid-upper gunner gave defensive fire but it went wide. Sergeant Ronald West the 21-year old wireless operator and the gunners were dead. Flying Officer Herbert Keith Sheasby the 31-year old navigator and Pilot Officer Douglas Raymond Eley the 20-year old Canadian bomb aimer did not survive their parachute jumps. Backwell-Smith and Sergeant N. V. Sirman the engineer landed safely and they were taken prisoner. Finally, Rökker lost sight of the enemy. It was the only time he failed to see his attack through to the end and confirm its success visually; therefore the kill was only provisionally awarded. Carlos Nugent flew almost 150 sorties with Rökker, participating in 62 of his 64 victories which Rökker achieved in 161 sorties.

First Jagdkorps returned with claims for thirty kills for the loss of nine

aircraft and crews. Bomber Command lost 37 aircraft, or 4.3% of the total force and six more were written off in crashes and collisions. Five Viermots were credited to I. and II./NJG6 for the loss of six Bf 110s, which crashed due to lack of fuel. II./NJG1 operating from Ste-Dizier, claimed four four-engined bombers destroyed, two of which were downed by Hauptmann Eckart-Wilhelm 'Hugo' von Bonin. On the night of Saturday 18/Sunday 19 March Frankfurt was raided by 846 aircraft. For the loss of six twin-engined night-fighters (including two of I./NJG6) the German defences claimed 22 heavies, eleven of which were attributed to the 'Tame Boars' of I Jagdkorps. Five crews of I. and II./NJG6 destroyed four Halifaxes and a Lancaster. Oberleutnant Hans Jörg Birkenstock, Staffelkapitän III./NJG6 rammed Halifax LK750 MH-Y2 on 51 Squadron over Baumholder for his seventh and final Abschüsse. Flying Officer Charles R. Seaman, who was piloting the bomber, Flight Sergeant Edward A. Glover the 29-year old bomb aimer, and Sergeant Leslie Harrold Baldwin the mid upper gunner were killed. The rest of the crew survived and were taken prisoner. Sergeant Louis Henderson Gulliver, the rear gunner came down in the central section of the Halifax, being one of a few to survive a drop of 23,000 feet without a parachute, although he was very badly injured. Birkenstock and Unteroffizier Walter Welz, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Kurt Maciejewski, bordshütze, also managed to bail from their stricken aircraft. Birkenstock was killed on 19 May; probably shot down by an Intruder and crashing at Vossenack/Eifel. Maciejewski was killed a few days' later, on 27 May.

Frankfurt was subjected to another devastating raid on Wednesday 22nd/Thursday 23rd March by 816 aircraft, from which 26 Lancasters and seven Halifaxes failed to return. The city now all but ceased to exist. Almost 1,400 people perished in these two raids and 175,000 inhabitants were bombed out. I Jagdkorps crews claimed 38 heavies destroyed. Six of these (four Halifaxes and two Lancasters) went to Oberleutnant Martin 'Tino' Becker, Staffelkapitän, 2./NJG6 and Unteroffizier Karl-Ludwig Johanssen, his Funker, during a 'Tame Boar' sortie from Finthen aerodrome. After being led into the bomber stream, all their victims went down within an hour between 2142 and 2239 hours. Lancaster III ND351 skippered by Pilot Officer R. E. Cooper was shot down by Wilhelm 'Willi' Glitz of 4./NJG2 in a Bf 110 at Minden at 2130 at an altitude of 5800 metres. Flight Sergeant Ronald Hinde the rear gunner was killed in the attack. All the other crewmembers were taken into captivity. Sergeant P. J. Copus the mid-upper gunner, recalled: 'The field in which I had landed what only yards away from a row of houses. The occupants were on me immediately I landed and I was dragged into one of the houses amid much shouting and bravado. It was widely known that German civilians were not exactly welcoming towards aircrew who fell into their hands and I was very nervous about the whole situation. They shoved me into one corner of a room. My chute had been gathered into an untidy bundle and was dumped beside me. In the other corner were grouped a cross-section of the neighbourhood. They were gesticulating and shouting at me in unintelligible German. In the circumstances I did not feel at all like a 'terror flier' as the Nazis called RAF

bomber crews. Handsome, young wide-eyed children were among the crowd. As a gesture of goodwill I took some chocolate from my flying-suit pocket and offered it to them. They recoiled hastily, either not knowing what it what it or suspecting what poisoned perhaps. To prove it was safe I ate a little myself and returned the rest to my pocket but the atmosphere was tense and I sensed some sort of authority had been alerted and would remove me before something unpleasant happened. Fortunately, the civil police arrived promptly and I was hauled off on foot to the local police station where I was thrown unceremoniously, without food or water, into a damp cell in which the only piece of furniture was a bed. There was not even a blanket. I attempted to sleep but it was extremely cold. In an attempt to keep my feet from freezing I managed to squeeze into one flying boot.

'At some point during the night I was dragged out of the cell and upstairs to an office where I was confronted by the local burgomeister. There were he told me, the bodies of several aircrew in the mortuary. If I would tell him the names of my crew he would let me know if any of them were among the dead. I felt unable to cooperate in this kind offer which of course was a fairly transparent ruse to get more information out of me. My response wat perhaps equally transparent but it served well enough to show that I did know what he was up to. The crew I had been flying with, I told him, were all unknown to me. My presence on the aircraft had been a last minute arrangement as a substitute. However, I added helpfully, I would be prepared to go to the mortuary and point out anyone I recognised. This offer was refused and I was promptly returned to my cell.

'In the morning, after at extremely uncomfortable night, I was brought a cup of coffee substitute and something unidentifiable to eat. Shortly afterwards I was dragged out of the cell and outside where a horse and cart were waiting. Surprisingly, my chute which returned to me and as I flung it into the cart I saw Flight Sergeant A. Lunt, the bomb aimer, already aboard. He had a leg wound. As I started to climb up into the cart with him, I was pulled back and told that I must walk along behind, thus presenting the entire populace who had turned out to watch, with another opportunity to shout and scream abuse as we plodded slowly through the town.'

Four victory claims were credited to I./NJG2, three of which were destroyed by Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker. Frankfurt for Pilot Officer 'Dickie' Atkins' Halifax crew on 578 Squadron at Burn (which was 'cold, wet and full of mud') would be the final trip of their first tour. No other crew on the squadron had finished their tour because of heavy losses sustained in the Battle of Berlin. Group Captain Nigel Marwood-Elton DFC, Burn's Station Commander, flew as Atkins' second dickey on Halifax III 'R for Robert'[18] and Flight Sergeant Eric Sanderson manned the four Brownings in the rear turret. Sanderson recalls:

'We had an early evening take-off. The last turning point was Hannover at about 2200 hours and we were on the run down to Frankfurt. Night-fighters were active and combats were to be seen. A little after 2200 we were at about 20,000 feet when I saw a Ju 88 slide underneath my turret. My evasive action was always a steep diving turn to port. We lost about 3,000

feet, got back on course and I expected to have lost the Ju 88 but he was still there underneath us! We tried a corkscrew. The Ju 88 followed us through the lot and we did another diving turn. I was worried for this one was special and now I made my error for which he had been waiting! I told my pilot to bank the aircraft so that the mid-upper might shoot downwards. The fighter was still below whilst our Halifax hung there with the pilot fighting to get control of the fully loaded bomber. That was when the Ju 88 hit us in the bomb bay and in the petrol tanks on the starboard wing. 'Dickie' Atkins ordered, 'Parachute, Parachute, Jump, Jump!'

'I opened the turret doors and pulled my chute in. My helmet, mike and oxygen were off. Now which side? Port, or starboard? Most of the fire was on the starboard side and did my WOp/AG have his trailing aerial out? (Not the best thing to meet bailing out of the port side of a rear gun turret). So starboard side, a fast-roll through the flames and away! But No! My feet were caught in the turret and I was hanging half in and half out. I tried to get back in the turret to free my legs and try again but after several attempts I gave up. I now thought of pulling the ripcord but the thought of being pulled out of my legs delayed my decision. However, life with or without legs was sweet and preferable so I pulled the string. I shot out of the turret like a cork out of a bottle. I must have been only about 500 feet from the ground. The next thing my chute was fully open and I was swinging on the end of it. Looking down I saw that I was about to enter trees below. I was knocked out and must have been out for some time because when I started getting out of my parachute, Mae West and flying gear and checking if I still had my legs, I saw the burning aircraft only a few hundred yards away. Men were shouting to each other around the fire. I was unable to walk and my hands and face were burnt so evasion was out of the question and I called to them.'

Eric Sanderson was taken to a village nearby and next day was transported to Herborn fifteen miles from Frankfurt where he met Group Captain Marwood-Elton. Happily, he was re-united with the other members of his crew over the next few days. All eight men had bailed out safely before their Halifax crashed. Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker, flying a Ju 88R-2 had shot down Atkins and his crew, his third victim that night, as Rökker recalls: 'I took off from our operational airfield Langensalza at 2010 hours and I shot down my first adversary at 2130 hours near Emmen, Holland. A second Abschuss followed at 2227 hours near Koblenz and at 2235 hours I claimed Atkins' Halifax in Steinringsberg near Herborn. I landed safely back at Langendiebach at 2330 hours.'[19]

Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker, having claimed three Abschüsse on each of the nights of 15/16 March and 22/23 March now looked to take his score to twenty on the night of 24/25 March when the 'Big City' was visited for the last time during the Battle of Berlin by 811 bombers. One hundred-knot winds were experienced that night, instead of the anticipated sixty-knot tailwind and the bomber stream was spread out over fifty miles of sky and stretched back for another 150 miles. Single engined 'Wilde Sau' and twin-engined 'Zahme Sau' fighters took advantage and they and the flak claimed

44 Lancasters and 28 Halifaxes. Seventy-two missing bombers or 8.9% of the force was the price paid by Bomber Command for the delivery of 2,493 tons of bombs on Berlin's vital war factories this night. Four of the missing Main Force Lancasters were on 115 Squadron and were all victims to night-fighters. LL730 was set on fire by a night-fighter during the outward flight and was steered by Flight Sergeant Ieuan Glyndwyr Williams towards Sweden but the Lancaster ran out of height and only the bomb-aimer succeeded in abandoning it seconds before it crashed at Kropelin in northern Germany. DS678 was skirting Leipzig on the way home when the end came and Pilot Officer Leonard Myles McCann RCAF died with four others of his crew. Two of the crew survived and were taken into captivity. LL694 had reached Holland before it was pounced upon at 0020 hours by Twenty-six year old Hauptmann Martin Drewes of 11./NJG1, one of Germany's foremost 'Experten' and crashed at Epse, four kilometres south-east of Deventer in the vicinity of Gorssel. There were no survivors on the crew of 23-year old Pilot Officer Thomas Elliott Vipond.[20] Most of Drewes wartime victories were achieved with his crew of Oberfeldwebel Georg 'Schorsch' Petz and Oberfeldwebel Erich Handke in Bf 110G-4 aircraft which had sharks teeth painted on the nose.

Feldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3 claimed three aircraft. These included Lancaster I ME640 on 460 Squadron RAAF at Teglingen, which crashed near Osterbrock with the loss of 25-year old Flight Lieutenant Allan Francis McKinnon DFC RAAF and crew and Lancaster III ND657 on 630 Squadron at Altharen, which crashed at Meppen with the loss of 22-year old Pilot Officer Clifford Leslie Eldridge Allen and crew. At 2235 hours Oberleutnant Martin 'Tino' Becker of 2./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster at Worlitz/Passau.

Oberstleutnant Helmut 'Bubi' ('Nipper') Lent of Stab NJG3 took off in his Bf 110 with Feldwebel Walter Kubisch his 25-year old funker, a former blacksmith and the son of a machine fitter, from Helbigsdorf in Saxony. Lent had been appointed Geschwaderkommodore of NJG3 on 1 August 1943. After 73 kills, of which 65 were claimed at night, Lent was awarded the Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub und Schwertern on 2 August. The Swords were presented to him at the Führerhauptquartier on 10/11 August. In January 1944 Lent shot down three Viermots in one night, but his aircraft was damaged by return fire, requiring a forced landing. On the night of 22/23 March he used only 22 cannon shells to down two Lancasters, the first at 2126 and the second nine minutes' later to take his score to 83 Night-Abschüsse. A third member of Lent's crew was Leutnant Werner Kark, born in Hamburg on 26 August 1913, who was a war correspondent and peacetime editor of *Oberdonau Zeitung,* a Hamburg newspaper, who flew as a trained bordmechaniker. Kark, who had been attached to a series of front-line Luftwaffe units since 1940, flying many sorties as a full member of crew over England, Greece, Africa and Russia, made it a practice only to report from personal experience.

'When our search radars picked up a strong force of British bomber units assembling in the early evening of 24 March there were good conditions

for take-off and landing at all the night-fighter fields in the Reichsgebiet for the first time in a long period. There was no moonlight, but there was a splendid starlit sky and a bright streak in the northern heaven. 'It's going to be a fruitful night,' said Oberstleutnant Lent as we climbed over the wing into the cabin of the Messerschmitt 110. During the last raid he had brought himself back to the top of the list of successful night fighters again [with his 84th and 85th victories].

'Scramble! The enemy is approaching on an easterly heading over the West Friesian islands, not making a feint but heading directly for Berlin. At this very moment our fighters are racing along the runways at their bases, gathering at their operational altitude and being controlled directly into the bomber stream. 'Bomber's Death' will again reap a terrible harvest among the enemy squadrons tonight!

'What wonderful visibility there is in this first shining early spring night! The broad sea, dark islands, knife-sharp coastline, the canopy of searchlights spreading protectively above the towns, the venomous muzzle-fire of the flak, the bursting shells, the coloured recognition signals of our fighters like will-o'-the-wisps in the sky - the eerily beautiful picture of the nocturnal air battle in all its breathtaking splendour spreads out before us as we enter the arena. The first enemy aircraft, the Path Finders, have reached the mainland. After them follows the main force, a never-ending stream of bombers on its way to Berlin.

'In our cabin there is completely silence. The flak fire on the outskirts of the town grows stronger. The beams of the searchlights form a network of light in the darkness. Quite calm and precise, we suddenly hear on our intercom: 'There's one ahead of us, Herr Oberstleutnant!' Oberfeldwebel Kubisch, the Kommodore's bordfunker, currently the only one of his trade in the Nachtjagd to hold the Knight's Cross, sits there motionless. Lent goes in at full speed. 'Now he's on our left,' says Kubisch. Suddenly something hits the fuselage of the Messerschmitt like the crack of a whip. We have run into the slipstream of the enemy bomber flying ahead of us. 'I've got him - I can see him,' comes from the front seat. Slowly we creep up on the enemy.

'The Kommodore opens fire. Dull thuds vibrate through the fighter's fuselage. There are dazzling flashes in the cockpit. All our guns are sending a long burst into the heavy four-engined bomber aircraft ahead of us. 'He's burning,' says Oberstleutnanl Lent, 'he's really burning!' It comes from his mouth as casually as if he were sitting at his office desk. At the same time we catch sight of the burning enemy. Its wide wings are swathed in flame. In a steep dive it races towards the earth like a torch. Searchlights pick it up and follow it down over the silent landscape until it hits the ground. A blazing pyre, black smoke, then fiery embers. The first kill this memorable night and certainly a Path Finder.

'A quarter of an hour, half an hour later. Fires are burning strongly all around us. The agitated probing of the searchlights in the sky, the thin lines of tracer from other night fighters, burning enemy bombers and coloured flares show that the bomber stream is still advancing through our airspace. We continue searching, constantly changing our heading. Ahead and to the

right!' says Kubisch. 'Still further to the right!' A new contact. Once again the enemy-machine takes skilful evasive action. We follow him, turning, climbing, diving all the time, copying his every manoeuvre. Behind this enemy aircraft is one of Germany's best night fighters!

'Suddenly, ghost-like, the Tommy looms up ahead of us. Massive shape, wide wings, twin fins, four powerful engines. The Kommodore presses on the firing buttons. For us these are moments of high tension. Will his aim be true?

'A sinister night-time picture. We have experienced its like many times when hunting above the Reichsgebiet. Then suddenly the faint silhouette of the heavily damaged enemy bomber appears above us. A broad sheet of flame from the centre of the fuselage tells us that he is badly hit. Behind him he is trailing thick banners of smoke. Once, twice, three times a small shadow sweeps past the tail unit of the bomber. The British are bailing out! But the pilot must still be at the controls. The bomber is still capable of flying and he is trying to escape.

'A second attack! Our cannon and machine guns hammer out again. It is the coup de grace. The bomber loses height more and more swiftly, descending towards the wide countryside in a steep dive. Like a shadow, careful and alert in case despite everything the enemy still recovers, we follow him until finally, some distance from us, a huge ball of fire on the ground marks his end. This is another cargo of bombs that will not reach Berlin.

'We leave the battle area. The stream is still heading to the east. We know that comrades from other Geschwader will infiltrate the bomber stream from all directions and claim fresh victims. On the broad bombers' road to Berlin tonight more fires from shot-down bombers than ever before will show the British airmen that once again a very heavy price must be paid in blood for terror attacks on the capital of the Reich.'[21]

Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker, Staffelkapitän 1./NJG2 flying a Ju 88R-2 destroyed a Lancaster in the Berlin-Leipzig area at 2250 hours for his 18th Abschuss. At 2320 hours he claimed a 'Halifax' southwest of Bernberg; actually Lancaster II DS664 'K-King' flown by Flight Sergeant Jim Newman. The attack on the Lancaster left a fierce fire burning inside the fuselage. At 21,000 feet the rear turret of a Lancaster bomber was a cold and lonely place, separated from the rest of the crew by two sets of doors and twelve yards of fuselage. It's a cramped space, little more than a shell for the body of the gunner, clad in his bulky flying clothes. There was not even room for him to wear a parachute, only the harness; his chute pack is stowed in the main fuselage, a few feet inside the second door and separate from the other crew members' packs. In an emergency the gunner had to leave his turret, get his chute pack, hook it on to the harness and then bail out, hoping that the trailing radio aerial would not cut him in two. Being a 'Tail-End Charlie' was rated by the RAF a 'hazardous occupation.'

Sergeant (later Warrant Officer) Nicholas S. Alkemade, the son of a Dutch father and English mother who was born in North Walsham, Norfolk had joined the RAF in 1940 at age 18. He served in Air-Sea Rescue launches

until, 'wanting more excitement,' he transferred to Bomber Command as a rear-gunner, joining Flight Sergeant Jim Newman's all-sergeant crew. By mid-March the 21-year-old rear gunner had flown a dozen ops. His thirteenth arrived on the night of Friday the 24th of March when eighteen Lancasters at Witchford were detailed for the raid on Berlin. 'K-King' was hit by flak over Frankfurt before the crew got to the 'Big City' and by the time they reached the Reich capital it was close to midnight. 'As our Lancaster neared Berlin' recalled Alkemade 'we could see the long fingers of searchlight beams probing the sky. Closing in, we spotted the sparkling red and green markers laid down for us by our Path Finders ahead. Plane after plane made its bombing run and fireworks erupted below us: golden incendiary fires, brilliant white and red explosions and the orange flashes of ack-ack guns. Then...Bombs away! Our own 4,000lb 'cookie' and three tons of incendiaries hurtled downwards. Through weaving searchlight beams we turned for home, keeping a sharp watch for jerry night fighters. I could see them at work in the distance. A flash of white light would burst into a great red-and-orange ball of fire, to arc across the sky towards the black earth below. Some poor Lanc had got it and some of my chums would not return to base.

'We were somewhere over the Ruhr when suddenly a series of shuddering crashes raked our aircraft from nose to tail, then two terrific thunderclaps as two cannon shells exploded on my turret ring mounting. The plexiglas blister shattered and vanished; one large fragment slicing into my right leg. Luckily my turret had been facing astern. I quickly depressed my guns and stared out. Not more than fifty yards from me was the shadowy outline of a Junkers 88 fighter, his leading edge a line of brilliant white flashes as he blazed away at our wounded ship. I aimed point-blank and squeezed the trigger of my four banked .303 Brownings. They fired simultaneously and the Junkers was transfixed by four streams of fiery tracers. He peeled off, his port engine trailing flame. I did not watch to see his fate; I was too concerned about my own. Flaming fuel from our tanks was streaking past me. On the intercom I started to report to the captain that the tail was on fire, but he cut me short with, 'I can't hold her for long, lads. You'll have to jump. Bail out! Bail out!'

'Flicking the turret doors behind me open with my elbows, I turned and opened the fuselage door beyond and stared for a horrified instant into a giant cauldron. Flame and smoke swept towards me. I recoiled, choking and blinded, into my turret. But I had to get my chute! I opened the doors again and lunged for the pack. Too late! The case had been burnt off and the tightly-packed silk was springing out, fold after fold and vanishing in puffs of flame. In the turret I took stock. Here I was, only 21-years old and this was the end of the road. Already oil from the turret's hydraulic system was on fire and flames seared my face and hands. At any moment the doomed aircraft might explode. Should I endure this roasting hell or should I jump? If I was to die, better a quick, painless end by diving into the ground... Quickly I hand-rotated my turret abeam, flipped the doors open and, in an agony of despair, somersaulted backwards into the night. Oh,

the blessed relief of being away from that shrivelling heat! Gratefully I felt the cold air against my face. I had no sensation of falling. It was more like being at rest on an airy cloud. Looking down I saw the stars beneath my feet. 'Must be falling head first,' I thought. If this was dying it was nothing to be afraid of. I only regretted that I should go without saying good-bye to my friends. I would never again see Pearl, my sweetheart back home in Loughborough. And I'd been due to go on leave the following Sunday. Then - nothing. I must have blacked out.

'In slow stages my senses returned. First there was an awareness of light above me which gradually became a patch of starlit sky. The light was framed in an irregular opening that finally materialized as a hole in thickly interlaced boughs of fir trees. I seemed to be lying in a deep mound of underbrush heavily blanketed with snow. It was bitterly cold. My head throbbed and there was terrible pain in my back. I felt all over my body. I found I could move my legs. I was all in one piece. In a sudden up-welling of unworthiness and of delight, the very first thought to flash into my conscious mind was a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving, of humble praise and utter wonderment. On the floor of the little patch of fir forest, into which I had hurtled parachute-less from a hell three and two-fifths miles above it, this was not blasphemy. 'Jesus Christ,' I said. 'I'm alive!'[22]

'I tried to sit up but it hurt too much. Craning my neck I could see that my flying boots were gone and my clothes scorched and tattered. I began to be afraid of freezing to death. In the pocket of my tunic I found the flat tin, badly bent, in which I kept my cigarettes and my lighter. The cigarettes were unharmed; I lit up. My watch, I found, was still ticking. The luminous hands showed 3.20; it had been close to midnight when our aircraft was hit. Attached to my collar was the whistle for use in case of ditching at sea to keep crew members in contact with one another. 'Here is one man who is happy to become a prisoner of war,' I said to myself. From time to time I blew the whistle. It seemed hours later I heard a far-off 'Hulloo!'

'I kept whistling and the answering shouts grew closer. At last I could see flashlights approaching. Then some men and boys were standing over me. After relieving me of my cigarettes they growled, 'Raus! Heraus!' ('Get up!') When they saw I couldn't they put a tarpaulin under me and dragged me across a frozen pasture to a cottage. There an old lady with a gnarled but kindly face gave me the finest eggnog I ever tasted. As I lay on the floor I heard a car pull up outside. Two men in plain clothes clumped into the room. They looked me over carefully. Then, quite indifferent to my pain, they yanked me to my feet and bundled me out to their car. We seemed to hit all the bumps on our way to a hospital.

'I was a long time in the operating room. Only later did I learn the sum of my injuries: burnt legs. twisted right knee, a deep splinter wound in my thigh, strained back, slight concussion and a deep scalp wound; first-, second- and third-degree burns on face and hands. Most of this damage I had sustained before jumping. Finally, cleaned up and with most of the plexiglas fragments picked out of me, I was installed in a clean bed but not to sleep! In came a tall, pompous character in a Wehrmacht uniform, thin

as a hatchet in the face and wearing rimless glasses. Through an interpreter, a young convalescent soldier, he asked me the usual, probing questions: What targets did you attack? Where is your base? How many aircraft are there at your base? ... and many others. I stated my name, rank and number. To the other questions I could only reply, 'I am not allowed to answer.'

Then they began asking about my parachute. 'Where did you hide it? Did you bury it?' (Spies dropping into enemy territory commonly concealed their parachutes; airmen falling out of sky battles did not.)

'Parachute?' I said. 'I didn't use one!'

'I thought Hatchet-Face would burst with rage. He let out a stream of oaths, then turned on his heel and stalked out. For three days the questioning was repeated. Finally I was left alone. After three weeks, when my bounds were fairly healed, I was whisked off to Dulag Luft near Frankfurt and put into solitary confinement. The time gave me opportunity to think out how I might convince my interrogators that my incredible story was true.'

The Germans did not believe Alkemade's claim that he had jumped from a blazing bomber at a height of 6000 metres without a parachute but the remains of his parachute pack were found about twenty kilometres from where he had landed. Edgar William John Warren the 22-year old flight engineer, Charles Alfred Hilder, bomb aimer and John Joseph McDonough, mid upper gunner, had been burnt to death and had been buried in a military cemetery near Meschede with full military honours. Edgar Warren was on his 30th operation and was to have been his last before being screened. He was engaged to Miss Peggy Dean of Slough and was to have been married in St. Paul's Church at Slough at the end of April. From their names and numbers Alkemade realized that only he and 'Ginger' Geary, the navigator and Geoff Burwell the radio operator were left. He discovered later that they had been blown clear in the final explosion. After liberation Alkemade married Pearl and Burwell was his best man.'

Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker claimed another Lancaster east of Kassel at 2348 hours for his twentieth victory. Near Mönchengladbach at 2255 hours on 26/27 March, when a 705-strong force went to Essen and nine Lancasters and Halifaxes failed to return, most probably all shot down by twin-engined 'Tame Boars', he claimed victory number 21.

And then came Nuremberg. On Saturday 1 April 1944 the Air Ministry announcement struck horror in the hearts of the British people. It has been confirmed that the RAF went through the most severe night air battle of the war in its raid of Thursday night-Friday morning. Between 900 and 1,000 Halifax and Lancaster bombers took part in the operations, with the largest number going to Nuremberg. Several hundred German night-fighters - the largest number so far in any one night - repeatedly attacked the bomber formations, which had to fly through some 550 miles of strongly-defended territory to reach Nuremberg. In many cases the German ground defences used new rocket missiles which climbed into the sky creating broad streaks of light. The air battle over Germany lasted about

three hours in all. The air defence over Nuremberg itself was not as strong as had been anticipated given what had gone before. The bombers arrived at the city in dense succession shortly after 1:00 am. Heavy aerial combats raged again on their return flight. The RAF lost 10% of the aircraft dispatched, the heaviest losses it has suffered so far. Ninety-four bombers, thirteen of them Canadian, are now reported missing and not 96 as originally announced.

Night fighting in good visibility was ideal and the weather over Belgium and eastern France was 0/10ths to 4/10ths thin cloud while Holland and the Ruhr were cloudless. At Nuremberg there was 10/10ths cloud at 1,600 to 12,000 feet but the cloud veiled at 16,000 feet with generally good altitude visibility. Jamming was carried out on a large scale but Mosquito 'spoof' attacks on Cologne, Frankfurt and Kassel were identified for what they were because to the German defences they were apparently flying without H_2S. The heavies on the other hand could quite clearly be followed on radar by their H_2S bearings. As the bomber stream was clearly recognized from the start, it was attempted to switch in night fighters as far west as possible. All units of 3 Jagddivision were switched in over radio beacon 'Bonn'. 2 Jagddivision was brought near via radio beacons 'Bonn' and 'Osnabrück' and switched in by radio beacons 'Bonn' and 'Frankfurt' respectively. 1 Jagddivision was brought near via radio beacons Bonn and Harz and switched in by radar station north of Frankfurt, as was 7 Jagddivision. Single-engined units from Oldenburg, Rheine and Bonn were directed via radio beacon 'Frankfurt' to radio beacon 'Nürnberg'. Night fighter units from Ludwigslust, Zerbst, Jüterborg and Wiesbaden were led directly to radio beacon 'Nürnberg'.

The bomber stream began making condensation trails as they flew over Belgium towards the long leg which ran from south of the Ruhr east to a turning point Northwest of Nuremberg. It was this long leg that crews were apprehensive about because it ran for over 200 miles. Flying conditions over Germany were ideal for fighter aircraft against slow bombers who had inferior armament and the sky was absolutely clear with a near full moon and four-engined bombers making condensation trails which could be seen for miles. The fighters began their attack and from the number of tracers being fired, it appeared there were combats everywhere. One pilot remembered seeing around thirty aircraft go down in a short period and as they continued to the target the ground became covered with burning aircraft. Altogether, 246 twin- and single- engined night lighters were engaged. Despite the British jamming the first interception of the bomber stream in the area south of Bonn was successful. From there on in the bomber stream was hit repeatedly and the majority of the losses occurred in the Giessen-Fulda- Bamberg area. A staggering 82 bombers were lost en route to and near the target.

Hauptmann Martin Drewes took off from Laon-Athies in his Bf 110G-4 in search of more victories. Drewes, who had assumed command of III./NJG1 on 1 March, his 24-year old bordfunker Unteroffizier Erich Handke and his bordshütze Oberfeldwebel Georg 'Schorsch' Petz would

score 37 kills in less than five months. Handke and Petz had teamed up with Drewes shortly before the end of 1943 who at the time was Staffelkapitän 11./NJG1 and an 'Experte' with seven victories. Handke, born on 2 November 1920 in Darmstadt had trained as a bordfunker during 1941-42, crewing up with Feldwebel George Kraft and joining 12./NJG1 in October 1942. The team rapidly made a name for themselves, scoring fourteen Abschüsse during the following months. Their partnership came to a violent end on 17/18 August 1943 when Kraft, flying with another bordfunker was shot down by Wing Commander Bob Braham DSO DFC* on 141 Squadron. Kraft's body was washed ashore in Denmark four weeks' later. Handke then joined the crew of Oberleutnant Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer with whom he claimed five Abschüsse, before briefly flying on sorties with Oberfeldwebel Karl-Heinz Scherfling and contributing to the destruction of two more bombers. Handke has written that 'there was no feeling of hate against the bomber crews. We knew that they also believed they were doing their duty. Our whole ambition was to get as many bombers down as quickly as possible so as to save the lives of civilians and prevent those senseless destructions.'

Drewes Bf 110G-4 which sported its usual sharks teeth on the nose was one of the few fitted with the upward-firing 'Schräge Musik'. Huddled in the rear of the fighter 'Schorsch' Petz sat with two drums each holding 75 rounds of ammunition. Drewes flew on over Belgium heading for FF (Funk Feuer) Beacon 'Ida' just south of Aachen, a route which crossed the bomber stream's path into Germany. Ground control's running commentary told Drewes to take an easterly course.

Handke recalled: 'We had been told by the running commentary that the bombers were about five minutes away. I hadn't even switched on the radar set when Petz poked me in the back and pointed, 'There he is up there, the first one!' As we came round we saw another straight away, about 200 metres directly above. I switched on my set but we had dropped 2000 metres behind in the turn and had lost them.'

Hauptmann Drewes was unable to turn and give chase. 'Not to worry' he said to Petz: 'Where there is one, there will be others.'

'When the set warmed up' continues Handke 'I saw three targets on it at once. I headed for the nearest and Drewes picked it up at 600 metres. Weather was marvellous - clear sky, half-moon, little cloud and no mist - it was simply ideal, almost too bright. It was a Lancaster flying nicely on a steady course so that when we were comfortably positioned underneath and from about fifty metres Drewes opened fire with the upward firing cannon at one wing which immediately caught fire. We followed the Lancaster for five minutes until it crashed below with a tremendous explosion. It was always a sinister feeling to hang only thirty to fifty metres under a Lancaster, always expecting fireworks: but nothing of the kind ever happened. I always navigated my pilot to approximately 200 metres below the enemy aircraft. When about fifty metres below the bomber's port wing we opened fire, aiming between the two engines into the fuel tanks; and then we dived directly to port to make sure that the burning aircraft did

not hit us. With this kind of attack we always shot first, where in theory the tail-gunner should have spotted us first.'

The Lancaster - either LM376 on 467 Squadron or LM425 on 550 Squadron - continued its death dive to earth. It was 0005. Forty-five minutes later Drewes slid under another Lancaster. W5006, a 9 Squadron aircraft was being flown by Flying Officer 'Jimmy' Ling, a 23-year old Scot from Newmilns, Ayrshire. The crew, who were on their 25th operation, had taken off from Bardney at 2205 hours. Ling, who had made ten trips to Berlin, did not know that their Lancaster was above Drewes' Bf 110 and on the same course. Handke continues.

'We got fifty metres under it again but the cannon jammed after the second shot and could not be reloaded. The Lancaster must have been hit however, as it lost height quickly. But as we kept behind it, not having turned off in time, it must have spotted us, for suddenly it twisted into a corkscrew. We also dropped 600 metres. At 550 metres the Lancaster seemed to steady and we had to overcome the compulsion to attack in our old way - where one was exposed to the fire of the tail-gunner. But we were already well used to the new tactics of firing into the wings, which did not endanger us so much when the bomber's load went off. At long last Drewes raised the nose of our fighter and fired a long burst with his front armament into the bomber's starboard wing, which burst into flame. [Drewes' gunner's cannon had jammed]. For a second or so he forgot to dive away but there was no return fire from the rear-turret. The Lancaster's starboard inner engine dragged a banner of flame and its nose fell. As Drewes pulled away the Lancaster blew up, showering the sky with thousands of fiery fragments. I took a quick fix on my directional-finding gear and noted that the bomber had exploded in the air over the Vogelsberg area. Around us, bombers were dropping like flies sprayed with an insecticide gun.'

Only one parachute came out of Ling's Lancaster. It was the navigator, Sergeant H. Laws. The rest of the crew, including Sergeant Leonard Moss, who was nineteen and from Moss Side, Manchester and the tail gunner, Sergeant Italo Prada, a Londoner from St. Pancras, were killed. The Lancaster came down at Cleeburg, eight kilometres WNW of Butzbach.

Then at 0120 Drewes and his crew singled out his third victim of the night. It was Lancaster III ND390 OF-S on 97 Squadron which was being flown by Flight Lieutenant Desmond Rowlands DFC of Kenton, Middlesex. He and his crew were mostly second-tourists who were on their third operation with the Path Finders. 'At 700 metres' continues Handke 'we could see it was another Lancaster. We were about to attack from the rear again when Petz announced that he had cleared the stoppage in our cannon. With the 'oblique' cannon working we could now attack from below and to the side of the bomber, with less risk of being seen. Drewes edged the night-fighter closer and for a few seconds we were almost on parallel course. Unaware, the Lancaster flew on. Then Drewes raked it with a long burst aimed into the wing. Flames fanned from the engines along the fuselage to acknowledge the accuracy of his shooting.' [Six bodies were found near the main fuselage on the edge of a wood at Ahorn in the south-western suburbs of Coburg. The tail came down some

distance away and Flight Leutenant Richard A. D. Trevor-Roper DFC DFM's body was found in his rear turret. On 16/17 May 1943 he had been Guy Gibson's tail gunner on the famous Dams raid].

A minute after Drewes' third 'Lanki' went down, 25-year old Oberstleutnant Helmut Lent of Stab NJG3 picked out a Viermot at 0121 hours when the bombing was at its height. Lent had been forced to wait on the ground until 2340 hours before he was allowed to take off and yet other pilots had by then already claimed seven kills. His quarry 20-40 kilometres north of Nuremburg was a Halifax.[23] Werner Kark, who again flew with Lent and Walter Kubish, reported the night sortie, which appeared in the *Oberdonau Zeitung* the next day.

'This memorable night had already had an unusual prelude. We were ordered up to cockpit readiness. 'A red herring, a feint attack,' said the veterans among us: when was the last time that the British had come in bright moonlight and clear visibility? Nobody could remember a similar occasion. For months now we had accepted take-off on instruments, cloud layers up to an altitude of several thousand metres and thick darkness in the battle zone as the natural accompaniment to our difficult job.

'Still unconvinced and in grave doubt about the whole sense of our orders, we taxied out to take-off in 'Cäsar-Anton' [D5+CA]. The wings glittered in the bright light of the half-moon. Silver light shimmered on the runways, the hangar-roofs and the barrack blocks as Oberstleutnant Lent swept over the airfield at full throttle. If the British bomber formations should really dare to attack tonight there is no doubt in our minds that once again they would be on the receiving end of a bitter lesson of air-historical significance. But who among us could imagine the breathtaking events that would take place in this battle in the moonlight above the cities of Southern Germany, events that lay ahead of us, the like of which none of us, even the oldest and most experienced, had ever known? And we had flown many times by night along the aerial routes over Germany!

'Now we know that bomber streams are approaching German territory from the northwest. We are kept continuously informed on the R/T of the location of the leading machines. As their squadrons are approaching the target on a broad front strong forces of German night fighters from operational airfields storm into their flanks and then a continuous air battle spreads out over hundreds of kilometres.

'Ahead of us are dazzling lights: cones of searchlights shine out in the darkness, flak fire suddenly erupts above the towns. Flares are floating down.

'We are approaching the target area and in front of us bombers galore are going down. 'Man, man, man, it's all happening here!' the Kommodore shouts suddenly over the intercom. 'Kubisch - keep a good look out!' he adds. The Funker peers intently at his instruments.

'We are flying into the very field of battle. Hitherto on such occasions our eyes have always taken in the painful drama of the towns under attack; until tonight fires, explosions, target-indicators and areas of incendiary bombs have been the visible evidence of the nocturnal air battle, but tonight a look around shows us that this time it is the enemy who is being subjected

to one of his hardest tests of this war.

'The fires that we saw were the fires of fatally stricken British bombers crashing. In place of his Path Finders' markers there are the torches of aircraft going down in flames and the flickering flashes in the sky mark the bitter aerial combats between our fighters and their enemies. At this moment it is hard to concentrate on one's job in the aircraft and pay attention to one's own safety. This breathtaking drama is unfolding before us even before we reach the combat area. While we are burning inwardly to bring our own victims down from the sky, our comrades are doing great work. We used to think that twenty, thirty or even forty kills over Frankfurt, Hanover or Kassel marked the acme of our personal experience in these nights of fire, but in these moments all our previous experiences and expectations are exceeded. The facts tell us the truth. At the very moment that the Funker calls out to the pilot, 'There's one up there,' the aerial battle reaches a renewed climax. Below us the fires from the crashed bombers illuminate a thin covering of cloud. The flames of burning machines below it light it up blood-red. Around us it is as bright as day. Two, three, four combats have flared up very close to us. A fighter is just diving steeply down on its prey.

'To our starboard streams of tracer flash past our wings and above us we can make out the sharp outline of a Halifax swathed in flame from tail unit to cockpit. On our port side a bomber explodes in whirling fragments. 'Now we have picked up a prey of our own. Our foe seems to be overcome with fear. He is twisting and turning for his life in this inferno. But the Oberstleutnant doesn't let his victim off the hook. We follow him into a dive, pull up with him; go over on to the left wing, then the right one, so that everything in the cabin that is not fastened down floats up, ghost-like. Our target comes into our sights for a fraction of a second. Our pilot fires a long burst. Blood-red flashes streak from the barrels of our cannon. The shells hit his starboard wing, tear it off. For an instant wreckage fills the air and then the bomber goes down vertically and hits the ground. There is a ball of fire on the earth, a thick black cloud of smoke from the explosion, the 87th night kill [sic] of Oberstleutnant Lent.

'When we get back to base the Kommodore is dissatisfied with himself and with the world. 'Our comrades shot too many down!' he says - and then laughingly adds that nevertheless tonight has been one of his great experiences with the Nachtjagd. 'We will never forget this night. Even less so will the British terrorfliegers.'

Oberleutnant Martin 'Tino' Becker, Staffelkapitän, 2./NJG6 took off in a Bf 110 with his bordfunker Unteroffizier Karl-Ludwig Johanssen from Finthen airfield near Mainz on a 'Tame Boar' sortie. Becker's 110 had not yet been fitted with 'Schräge Musik'. If his Messerschmitt was not 'picked up' as he stalked a bomber, Becker would approach on the starboard rear side at a lower altitude, pull up the nose of the fighter and commence a skidding movement from right to left by applying rudder, at the same time firing with all his armament into the bomber. Becker's current score stood at nineteen victories and eight nights earlier he had shot down six bombers

when Frankfurt had been raided. Becker was guided by 3 Jagddivision into the bomber stream to the south of FF 'Ida'. There they intercepted and shot down six bombers on the outward route between 0020 and 0050 hours in 'Zahme Sau' fashion. After returning to Mainz-Flinthen to re-fuel and re-arm, Becker and Johanssen took off on a second sortie, once more under 'Himmelbett' control in Raum ('Box') 'Käuz' ('Owl') south of Luxemburg and northeast of Longwy on the bombers' homeward track. South of Luxembourg they destroyed Halifax III LW634 on 158 Squadron, which had been fired on over France by flak guns near Metz. Next day 'Tino' Becker received news that he had been awarded the Ritterkreuz. 'There were such a lot of British bombers around that we could have knocked them down with a fly-trap' he said. He was decorated personally by the Führer at Hitler's HQ in East Prussia.[24]

'Our loss of 94 bombers...was admitted in London last night to be heavy and no effort was made to minimize it' wrote the air correspondent of the *Daily Sketch*. Sixty-four Lancasters and 31 Halifaxes were lost and fourteen bombers crashed or crash-landed in England. This was the worst Bomber Command loss of the war and owed much to the 'Infiltration' method devised by 'Hajo' Hermann and Viktor von Lossberg who had developed the 'Wilde Sau' concept. Night fighters infiltrated the bomber formations, inbound and outbound and once in the stream, attacked the Viermots at will. It was to prove the most successful day or night victory of WWII. The Nürnberg raid had turned into a black affair for Bomber Command. It took Nachtjagd's total for March to 269 RAF bombers destroyed. After the war, General Schmid graphically commented: 'The flaming enemy aircraft served as flares, illuminating the bomber stream for the approaching German fighters'.

Nürnberg brought, for a brief period, the virtual cessation of heavy attacks. 'Before the Nürnberg raid', recalls Helmuth Schulte 'there had been an easing off in the British long-range night-fighter attacks on the aerodromes. These attacks were often unpleasant and brought us many losses but they were not decisive. This was because usually bad weather prevailed and this went against the long-distance night-fighters. But after the Nürnberg raid the bombers, when they eventually came back, were protected by these long-range fighters, which caused us very heavy losses. Above all, we could hardly ever fly on a direct course without running into the danger of being caught by a long-range British night-fighter.[25]

During April Bomber Command became engaged in the preparations for 'D-Day'. Mainly they focused on Luftwaffe airfields and transportation targets in the Low Countries, France and Belgium. Despite the risk of casualties to civilians and amid protests from the Vichy regime, on the night of 10/11 April five marshalling yards, four in France at Tergnier, Laon, Aulnoye and Tours and the Merelbeke-Melle railway yards at Ghent on the main line to Brussels, were targeted by 908 bombers. Just over 120 Halifaxes and ten Path Finder Mosquitoes bombed at Ghent and 148 Lancasters and fifteen Mosquitoes hit the corner of the railway yards at Laon. A Lancaster on 622 Squadron at Mildenhall failed to return. Ten Halifaxes were lost

from the 157 aircraft that had set out to attack Tergnier. Operating from Juvincourt Hauptmann Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich, Staffelkapitän, 1./NJG6, a former transport pilot who had joined the Nachtjagd in 1942, claimed two of the missing Halifaxes in the Montdidier area at 0003 and 0011 hours. Friedrich had claimed five Abschüsse serving with 8./NJG4. On 1 January 1943 he was appointed Staffelkapitän of 10./NJG4 and Friedrich gained a further three victories with the unit. One of Friedrich's kills on 10/11 April was possibly Halifax LV880 on 51 Squadron, flown by 31-year old Pilot Officer Horace Mervyn Hall RAAF, which had taken off from Snaith at 2120 hours to bomb the rail installations at Tergnier. Friedrich's attack from 3200 metres caused the port wing to catch fire and Hall attempted to extinguish the flames by putting the Halifax into a steep dive. This was unsuccessful and shortly after ordering his crew to abandon the aircraft it exploded and went down near Montdidier just after 0011 hours. Hall and three of his crew were killed.[26] Flying Officer Frederick Godfrey Kirkwood RAAF the 22-year old navigator, who evaded capture and the two air gunners, Sergeant Patrick William Hegarty RAFVR (29) and Flight Sergeant Mervyn James Fairclough RAAF (20) were blown out and managed to land safely. They were taken into captivity.

Hauptmann Kurt Fladrich of 9./NJG4 scored the first of his two Halifaxes this night at 0001 hours to take his score to nine Abschüsse. His first victim was LV858 on 10 Squadron piloted by 23-year old Flight Lieutenant William George Barnes DFC which had taken off from Melbourne at 2105 hours. Flight Lieutenant John Harold Coller DFC one of three air gunners on the eight-man crew recalled: 'We were hit by fighter cannon and set on fire, with the inevitable fall to earth one way or another. Suddenly, we were turned into a flaming torch and every one of the crew knew we had little chance of surviving this situation. 'Abandon aircraft; bail out; bail out!' came the call from the captain as the flames lit up the cabin and the plane started its shallow dive down into enemy territory. We had the 'snap-on' type of parachute, which was normally carried under a seat so as not to impede movement about the aircraft under normal flight conditions. Having secured my chute, I moved from my radio station forward and found the navigator and bomb aimer struggling with the escape hatch in the forward cabin floor. We still had some light in the cabin, which was a blessing. When you bail out of an aircraft, assuming you already have properly snapped your chute into place, the remaining vital procedure is to ensure you have your hand on the rip cord in order to open the chute as soon as you're free of the aircraft. Orientation while falling through the air in the dark under considerable stress is not easy unless you make a habit of bailing out which none of us had.

'The navigator was prepared to go first, but the hatch was small and he needed both hands to lower himself through the opening. We were waiting for a while for him to cut free and drop, but he didn't. We could clearly see the fingers of his left hand still gripping the edge of the hatch. He had frozen in fear and no one else could escape the burning aircraft until he let go. After what seemed to be an interminable delay, I decided to do

something. I gently pried his fingers off the hatch edge with my boot and he was gone. The bomb aimer was next and he wasted no time. Burning fuel was streaming down the fuselage as I threw myself down that escape hatch with my right hand clutching the rip cord as I went. Probably not a moment too soon I apparently fell free of the aircraft just in time, because no one else escaped after my exit and I strongly suspect that the wing separated, making movement extremely difficult in a twisting vertical dive. (This theory was born out much later when we examined the crash site and found the right wing hundreds of yards away from the main wreckage and probably explained why the skipper never had a chance of escaping the twisting wreckage as it fell to earth). It was practically impossible to parachute from a stricken plane once a wing had separated from the fuselage, causing a violent spiral motion and centrifugal force as the plane would fall vertically, overtaking and killing any crew member who might be in its path, once the chute had deployed. We had cannon shells and fire weakening the right wing spar which could have let go any moment and eventually did. If I had hesitated in taking the necessary action to get the navigator to break free of the hatch rim, there most likely would have been no survivors from that incident. It's anyone's guess what happened next, because I was knocked unconscious and did not wake up until I found myself lying across the main Soissons-Paris railroad tracks with the sound of bloodhounds barking and German soldiers yelling at each cither as they searched in the dark for our crew in the French countryside. My battledress was ripped open from shoulder to ankle. I had a severe concussion and black eyes for three weeks. I was bruised but alive and the first thing we had been trained to do was to hide the parachute immediately.'[27]

At 0027 hours Fladrich claimed his second Abschuss of the night when he shot down Halifax LW441on 640 Squadron skippered by 21-year old Pilot Officer Robert Axton who was killed along with his six other crew members. Friedrich (who was killed on 16/17 March 1945 in a collision with a Lancaster) and Fladrich, who would survive the war with fifteen victories, had fought well but another of their fellow 'Experten' would surpass them this night.

Endnotes Chapter 3

18 LW540 LK-R.

19 In November 1978 Sanderson and Rökker came face to face for the first time at a meeting of the German Air War Historical Society at Hetschbach, Germany. They shook hands and from that very moment became friends. Rökker concludes. 'I think that such a friendship between former adversaries can only develop, if both sides approach each other unreservedly. Our contact is the same as I have with my German friends. Not the past but the present rules our close friendship.

20 *Memories of RAF Witchford* by Barry and Sue Aldridge (Milton Contact Ltd 2013).

21 Quoted in *The Lent Papers* by Peter Hinchliffe.

22 A body falling freely in space, with no resistance of air, would drop 16 feet the first second, 48 feet during the next, 80 feet in the third, etc. Falling from 18,000 feet, therefore, it would attain a final speed of 730 mph before crashing to the earth. A body falling through the atmosphere, however, is retarded by the resistance of the air. Because of this, Alkemade's 'terminal' speed was estimated at approximately 122 mph. His incredible survival can be attributed only to the fact that the final stage of his fall was cushioned, first by the thickly interlaced branches of fir trees and further by the heavy, snow-covered brush of which he landed.

23 Which was either MZ508 on 578 Squadron flown by Flight Sergeant Albert Edward Pinks of Barking, Essex, which went down nearing the aiming point to crash at Ermreus, 13 kms NE of Eerlangen, or LW429 flown by Flying Officer John Roy Taylor RCAF of Winnipeg on 425 'Alouette' Squadron, which crashed at Tauchersreuth, 4 km NE of Heroldsberg. (Or, Taylor may have been shot down by a Ju 88 flown by Feldwebel Emil Nonnenmacher of III./NJG2). All of Pinks' crew, who were on their first operation, had been on the squadron just five days. They were all killed. Taylor, of Winnipeg and his crew who were on their 7th operation were all killed also.

24 The Halifax, which had been hit by flak near Metz, crashed at Eischen, 17 kilometres WNW of Luxembourg. Hughes and four of his crew were captured and taken prisoner. Two other men evaded capture.

25 *The Bombing of Nuremburg* by James Campbell (Futura 1973). Schulte was WIA on 2/3 February 1945; hit by return fire from a bomber he was attacking over Heilbronn (Balss).

26 Hall left a widow, Gladys Mary Hall of Bendigo, Victoria. Flight engineer, Sergeant Gordon Joseph William Peck RAFVR (19); air bomber, Flying Officer Charles Thomas Hartley RCAF (24) and wireless operator Warrant Officer John Bruce Osborn RAAF (22).

27 Sergeant T. A. Crossman, flight engineer; Sergeant G. Mathews, navigator and Flying Officer E. L. R. Pottier, WOp/AG were taken prisoner. John Coller and Pilot Officers' A.W.Alliston, air gunner and M.S.Steel, air bomber evaded capture. Sergeant Gordon Charles Howell the 19-year old rear gunner was killed. See Kracker Archive.

Chapter 4

Horrido!

'Auchtung, Auchtung!'
'Lisa-Marie 7'-'Rolf'-Marie 6.
'Rolf'-Lisa-Marie 5'-'Marie 4'-Rolf-(more).
'Rolf-'Stop'-Marie 2'
'A little Lisa-(same height)-Lisa-Marie 1,
'5-Rolf- Marie 1'
'A little Siegfried (climb)-Rolf-Marie 1-
'Lisa-Lisa-Stop-Marie 0,8-a little Rolf".

Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann listened impatiently but attentively to the long litany of instructions from his bordfunker Günther Hauthal crouched in the cockpit of their Bf 110G-4 night-fighter of 8./NJG4 as he continued his 'Helle Nachtjagd' (night chase) across the French countryside. bordschütze 'Willi' Schopp made up the third member of the successful crew. Thirty minutes earlier on the night of 10/11 April the 23-year old Staffelkapitän, born on 26 May 1920 in Bochum, had lifted the Messerschmitt off from Juvincourt to the north of Reims. His aircraft was not yet fitted with top secret 'Schräge Musik', the code name for the new and highly successful upward firing twin cannon but with its deadly electronic wizardry and heavy firepower it was more than a match for an enemy bomber. Bergmann climbed at maximum rate to an operational height of 5300 metres. The route was to take them to one of the 'Himmelbett Räume' ('four poster bed boxes') each one of them a theoretical spot in the sky, in which one to three fighters orbited a radio beacon waiting for bombers to appear. Each box, about twenty miles square, which had names like 'Hamster', Eisbär ('Polar Bear') and 'Tiger' (around Terschelling Island), was a killing-zone in the path of hundreds of incoming prey. All approaches to occupied Europe and Germany were divided into circular and partly overlapping areas, which took full advantage of Bomber Command's tactic in sending bombers singly and on a broad front and not in concentrated streams. The 'Himmelbett Räume' and the Nachtjäger were orchestrated by Jägerleitoffiziers (JLOs or GCI- controllers) in 'Battle Opera Houses. Though the JLOs were far removed from the actual battles, high tiered rows of Leuchtspukers or 'Light Spitter girls' projected information onto a hugh screen for them and operators moved the plots on the Seeburg plotting tables.

'No Kuriere in sight' the Jägerleitoffizier announced monotonously

at regular intervals. Bergmann had to continue orbiting. Bergmann had joined the Luftwaffe in May 1940 and after completing pilot training in July 1941 was assigned to the Ergänzungsstaffel (Training/Supplement Squadron) of NJG1. He was then assigned to 8./NJG4 in early 1942. His promotion to Staffelkapitän of 7./NJG4 had come in April 1944 by which time he had sixteen confirmed night-Abschüsse (victories) and was impatient to add to his score. Although the Nachtjagdgeschwader did not know the actual numbers involved, the night predators were unconcerned, satisfied in the knowledge that there would be scores of ubiqutous black 'Fat Cars' for them to aim for. Bergmann probably did not concern himself with the bombers'destinations. He was one of many who eagerly awaited the code word from the Jägerleitoffizier that would send him scurrying into action in his alloted box. As it turned out, instructions received put him within striking distance of just over 130 bombers - all of them Lancasters - en route to the marshalling yards at Aulnoye on the east bank of the River Sambre, thirty miles northwest of Ste-Quentin.

Suddenly, as if by magic, the JLO's guttural tones sounded in Günther Hauthal's earphones.

'Have Kurier for you, Kirchturm [Church Tower'] 10 (1000 metres), course 300°.'

Using the figures on a clock face, i.e. east to west in the northern part of the night fighting area, he added helpfully: 'Kurier flying from two to eleven.'

Startled but composed, the three-man crew reacted with excitement and enthusiasm. According to the information from the Jägerleitoffizier they were only a few kilometres behind a British bomber! The enemy aircraft had been picked up on Würzburg ground radar, fixed on the plotting table and transmitted to the Hauptmann and his crew stalking the bomber. As soon as the bordfunker picked up contact on his Lichtenstein radar set, he transmitted 'Emil-Emil' to alert his JLO. But there was no indication yet on the Lichtenstein. It was 0220 hours. They hoped to reach the 'Fat Car' before it left the range of the Würzburg ground radar.

'1000 metres, 800 metres, 500, 400, 300 metres!' Power off and minimum speed in order not to overtake him, Bergmann would attack 'von hinten unten' so that he could aim at the fuel tanks in the wing and escape the attention of the dangerous rear turret of the '4-mot'!

'There he is!'

Their eyes looked out and focused on a black shape of the Britisher [sic]. Small, blueish exhaust flames made it easier to keep the target in sight. Four engines, twin tail, were recorded almost subconsciously. No sudden movement that might attract their attention. Calm now! Guns armed? Night sight switched on? Everything OK! Now Bergmann could see that it was a 'Lanki'. He applied a little more power and approached him cautiously. Now he was exactly behind him at about 100 metres' range. The rear turret was clearly recognisable. Günther Hauthal kept silent.

'Pauke! Pauke!' ('Kettledrums! Kettledrums!')

Bergmann had obtained visual contact of his target. It was a Lancaster, crossing gently from starboard to port. ND586 on 460 Squadron RAAF skippered by 25-year old Flying Officer Arthur Harold Probert RAAF had taken off from Binbrook in Lincolnshire at 2341 hours. Flying Officer Robert Bruce McDougall, the 24-year old navigator was from Ascot Vale, Victoria; Flight Sergeant Austin Hardcastle Palfreyman the 22-year old air bomber came from Gregory Terrace, Queensland. Sergeant Basil Guy Wiseman RAFVR the 20-year old flight engineer was from Hendon, Middlesex and Sergeant Dennis Robbins, the 22-year old wireless operator came from Chapel End, Nuneaton. Robbins never had a chance to radio his base. Bergmann's bordfunker immediately transmitted 'Ich beruhe'. Then they closed in rapidly for the kill. The equipment was checked and the four machine guns and two MG-FF 2cm cannon were loaded and cocked. At the bordfunker's feet were ammunition drums with 75 rounds each for the pair of deadly cannon. Now the Lichtenstein screen was aglow with the green time base and the ground blips, which also showed their altitude.

'250, 200, 150 metres'. A slipstream shook the Messerschmitt. They were close! The 'Lanki' crew probably had no inkling of the imminent attack. Flight Sergeant William George Hogg the 19-year old Australian mid-uppper gunner on his fourteenth operational flight and Flying Officer Keith Francis Ryan RAAF the 20-year old rear gunner never had the chance to open fire. At 100 metres Bergmann pressed the gun button on the stick and was startled at the rattle of the cannon. He stayed behind the great night bird firing and observing the projectiles striking the rear turret and the fuselage. Strikes peppered the fuselage and danced along the wing root. An equally short burst of brightly coloured tracer disappeared into the Lancaster's wing and fuselage. He must have been hit! The Lanc burst into flames. Doomed, it fell away to port in a flaming death dive, impacting in a French field south west of Maubeuge at Vieux Mereuil.

'Horrido!' exclaimed Bergmann over R/T to ground control to announce his first success of the night. Telegrams would be sent to Arthur Probert's wife Irene in Australia and Dennis Robbins' widow Dorothy May in Warwickshire and the other five crewmembers' immediate families in the morning. Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Hogg of Goondi, Greenmount, received official notification that their only son Bill was believed to have lost his life. A report received from the International Red Cross at Geneva stated that according to an official German casualty list he and the remaining members of the crew lost their lives. Bill Hogg was a former pupil of the Greenmount State School and the Church of England Boys' Preparatory School, Toowoomba. All seven crew were laid to rest in Mauberge-Centre Cemetery in Nord.

Bergmann twisted and turned the 110, looking for more 'Fat Cars'. Ten minutes' later the crew found what they were looking for. It was another Lancaster. Another burst and it went down a few kilometres

north of Salarnes. 'Horrido!' southeast of Sailly five minutes later they downed yet another Lancaster. Cries of 'Horrido!' filled the airwaves once again. Bergmann's fourth victim went down to his guns north-northwest of Achiet-le-Petit. It had been only 23 minutes since the first encounter. Just seven minutes later a fifth Lancaster was destroyed in about as many seconds and gouts of fuel from ruptured tanks ignited and lit up the night sky with a reddish hue. The stricken Lanc impacted at Beauqueesne. Four minutes later Bergmann made it six. The downed Lancaster's engines buried themselves deep into the French earth near Vignacourt. North of Guignemicourt their seventh and final 'Lanki' went down in a screaming death dive. It was now 0306.

'Naxos' and 'Flensburg' equipment homing onto H_2S equipment and the 'Monica' tail-warning device might have identified some if not all of Bergmann's victims. Bomber crews were warned about this possibility and they were instructed not to leave sets on too long but the one sided encounter with the night fighter had lasted a devastating 46 minutes, with five victims being dispatched in the first thirty. It may be that the Hauptmann had downed some of them, if not all, or if out of ammunition, he may well have given 'Willi' Schopp his bordschütze free range with his two MG-FF 2cm cannon. Changing ammunition drums in a twisting and turning night-fighter would have made his task almost impossible but not if the pilot pulled alongside to allow Schopp to blaze away. In any event all seven Viermots took Bergmann's score to 23 and counted towards the Staffelkapitän's coveted Ritterkreuz. The highly prized Knight's Cross was awarded to Bergmann after he destroyed six Lancasters on the night of 3/4 May when over 340 Lancasters and fourteen Mosquitoes attacked Mailly-le-Camp. Bergmann was transferred to 6./NJG4 in May and on 9 June and he received the Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes.

On 11/12 April 352 heavies raided Aachen, for the loss of nine aircraft. Lancaster III ND395 on 83 Squadron was destroyed by the flak defences with the loss of 22-year old Flight Lieutenant Peter Frederick Denny and crew. All the other eight losses were due to Nachtjäger. One 'Lanki' each was claimed by Oberleutnant Werner Baake (100 kilometres west of Haarlem) and Feldwebel Rauer of 1./NJG1 at Venlo (42 kilometres east of Antwerp, on his first combat sortie). Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer of Stab IV/NJG1 took off from Sint Trond at approximately 2208 hours in his BF110 and climbed to 5000 metres. At 2305 his bordfunker received a contact west of Turnhout, which turned out to be Lancaster ND389 on 83 Squadron skippered by Pilot Officer Victor McConnell. Schnaufer moved closer, behind and probably slightly under the aircraft where it could not be seen and at 2315 opened fire on the Lancaster. It took the crew by complete surprise; the 'Lanki' caught fire immediately and started to burn quite fiercely. The crew bailed out but were too low for their parachutes to open. The Lancaster exploded 100 metres above the ground and crashed north of Beerse in Belgium at Boensberg. After about fifteen minutes after the crash, the Chief of

Police from Turnhout, a religious father and a nurse arrived in a car. The father administered the 'last rites' and about an hour later the Germans arrived and placed barriers around the aircraft. The crew were initially buried near a German airfield and were re-interred at Schoonselhof Cemetery in Antwerp where they now lie. After disposing of ND389 Schnaufer then claimed a second Lancaster (LL899 on 49 Squadron near St. Leonhard); the wreckage of which was discovered at Hauxbroek (Antwerpen). None on the crew skippered by Flight Lieutenant Donovan John Bacon DFC were found alive.

Towards the end of the month a series of deep penetration raids into Germany were mounted again, to which First Jagdkorps replied with successful 'Tame Boar' operations. On six nights, 21-28 April 1,407 night-fighter sorties were dispatched, which resulted in claims for 135 bombers destroyed.

On the evening of 18/19 April at Witchford near Ely the transport taking crews to briefing turned off the main street into Bedwell Hey Lane where they alighted at the briefing room. Wing Commander Robert H. Annan the Commanding Officer entered and in due course the curtain covering a large map on the end wall was pulled back to reveal the target for 27 Lancaster crew for the night would be the rail yards at Rouen, which was to be attacked by a force of 273 Lancasters and sixteen Mosquitoes. Another force of 202 Lancasters and four Mosquitoes and three 'Oboe' Mosquitoes were detailed to bomb Juvisy. Another force of 181 aircraft was to bomb Noisy-le-Sec and 171 aircraft would attack Tergnier. Another 168 aircraft were detailed to drop mines off Swinemünde and in Kiel Bay and off the Danish coast; in total, a new record for Bomber Command with 1,125 sorties being dispatched.

At Witchford the crews assembled in the crew rooms further along Bedwell Hey Lane and put on their flying gear before transport picked them up from the parachute shed nearby to take them to their aircraft. Twenty-year old Pilot Officer John 'Jock' Birnie and his crew, one of ten on 'B' Flight, were dropped off at their dispersal where their new Lancaster, LL668 'F-Freddie' awaited them. Shortly before take-off 'Jock' had left his cross golden Labrador/ greyhound 'Sandra' with WAAF map clerk Daphne 'Val' Valentine who was also taking care of another aircrew member's golden spaniel.[28]

One of 'C' Flight's Lancasters failed to take off due to engine failure but the other Lancasters circled until all the aircraft were airborne and heading for the south coast, over Newberrry before turning to head over the coast at Selsey Bill. As they crossed the coast at Le Havre they experienced a small amount of flak. At the target they found that the Path Finders had it well lit with TIs. One of the Master Bombers was Wing Commander Alan George Seymour Cousens DSO DFC MC (Czechoslovakia) commanding 635 Squadron. Four nights after this operation Cousins attacked by a night fighter on the operation on Laon and his Lancaster exploded. There was only one survivor.

At Rouen the Lancasters claimed a concentrated attack on the railway

yards with much destruction being caused. Back at Witchford the airfield prepared to receive the 26 returning Lancasters. Jim Towers a fitter, who was armed with a Sten looked up to the sky as he patrolled the airfield perimeter. Normally he worked in a hangar on the eastern side of the airfield but the Nachtjagd had stepped up 'Intruder' sorties and there had been rumours that enemy parachutists might be used against the bomber airfields.

The Luftwaffe had discontinued intruder operations over England late in 1941 because Hitler believed that German morale would be greater if British bombers were seen to fall on German soil rather than on England. In December 1943 General Schmid had gone to see Hermann Göring to present plans for a renewed Fernnachtjagd. Göring refused to give the go-ahead. He told Schmid that long-range intruder operations over the UK were not his business but this was for Generalmajor Dietrich Peltz to decide upon. Undaunted, Schmid turned to Generalmajor Hans Stumpff on several occasions during January and February 1944. (Stumpff at that time was responsible for the Reichsverteidigung (Air Defence of Germany). However, he was not interested in Schmid's plans either. Firstly, he insisted that the recently introduced AI radar SN-2 was of no account to fall into enemy hands; it was the only German radar that the RAF was not yet able to jam. Stumpff's second reason for his refusal was simple: Hitler himself was fundamentally opposed to Fernnachtjagd. Schmid was left with no choice but to shelve his plans. Despite Hitler's orders, II./KG51 under the command of Major Dietrich Puttfarken was granted permission in March to commence Fernnachtjagd operations from Soesterberg airfield in the Netherlands.

Sat in the control tower at Witchford WAAF radio operator Noreen Dunbar was also waiting and listening for the first of the returning aircraft to call in with 115's code name 'Blackmass'. Noreen, dressed in battledress jacket, heavy pullover and trousers was now doing a job far re moved from her civilian job modelling glamorous clothes. Three miles away in the village of Sutton, Frank Allen was on observer duty when a twin engined German aircraft flew low over their heads. He telephoned headquarters to report the sighting but was informed that he could be mistaken as no enemy aircraft had been detected on radar crossing the coast.

At Mepal the Lancasters on 75 Squadron were now returning and joining the circuit. At 0157 hours the pilot of JN-M asked for permission to land and was told to follow 'V-Victor' that was making its approach landing with its navigation lights showing. Just as 'V-Victor' touched down several dull thuds were heard, followed by bursts of cannon fire. A Me 410A-1 intruder aircraft of KG51 'Edelweiss' at Soesterberg airfield in the Netherlands had dropped anti-personnel bombs on the runway and attacked the first three Lancasters attempting to land. None of the Lancasters were hit but the runway lights were immediately extinguished and the remaining aircraft diverted to Tempsford and

Newmarket. Thirty four SD 10A anti personnel bombs had been dropped in two AB250 containers. Only a few of the bombs exploded on impact as they had been dropped from only fifty to seventy five feet. Ground staff marked the positions of the unexploded bombs to be dealt with later by the armourers. The runways would eventually be cleared and serviceable again by 1515 hours.

At Witchford the Lancasters on 115 Squadron were also returning and Noreen Dunbar received the call she had been waiting for. 'Hello 'Blackmass'. This is 'C-Charlie'; permission to pancake. Squadron Leader Grant was the first to return and touched down at 0157 hours. Now the returning aircraft would be stacked ready for their turn to land. Two more Lancasters landed safely. Flight Sergeant Colin Campbell and his crew had just joined the circuit when he saw what he thought was a twin engine fighter pass his starboard wing. Campbell immediately switched off his navigation lights and called up the tower to report his sighting. Informed that no other sighting had been made he was instructed to switch his navigation lights back on. Warrant Officer Hemming turned his aircraft into the funnels on approach to land. Ahead of him were two other aircraft. The aircraft navigation lights that Hemming could see in the far distance were those of Pilot Officer Birnie and Sergeant Lemoine. At 02.09 hours the undercarriage of Lemoine's Lancaster collapsed when it was three-quarters of the way along the runway and temporarily prevented other aircraft from landing. Pilot Officer 'Jock' Birnie was the pilot of one of the circling aircraft and, just one minute after Lemoine's Lancaster had crashed, he was shot down by an intruder of KG51. All the crew perished. Sadly, 'Sandra' and 'Timmy' would not see their masters again.

A second Lancaster, piloted by 29-year old Flight Lieutenant Charlie Eddy MBE, an Australian serving in the RNZAF, met a similar fate. Both aircraft fell close to the airfield giving none of the crew members time to escape. When news of 'Jock' Birnie's death arrived at the village of Gosforth his parents and his sister Lorna were devastated. So too was his old Headmaster. Mr. Wilson, who had so-inspired the young John Birnie with his stories of flying in World War One.[29] Oberleutnant Claus Breissner of 5./KG51 and 23-year old Major Dietrich Puttfarken, Staffelkapitän of 1./KG51 claimed the two aircraft. Puttfarken, a former bomber pilot, born in Hamburg had been awarded the Ritterkreuz on 7 October 1942 for completing 250 combat sorties.[30]

Noreen Dunbar recalled that the night 'is embedded in my mind. I was terrified but prayed it did not show. It was a sad, terrible, night; how awful to be shot sown anywhere but especially when one is home. Bullets were flying everywhere with noise and flames. The sky was brilliant with the blaze'.[31]

A Lancaster on 625 Squadron flown by Pilot Officer Joseph Patrick Cosgrove RCAF, one of thirteen on the squadron that were dispatched to Rouen, was completing his landing circuit at Kelstern when he was shot down by Leutnant Wolfgang Wenning of Stab III/KG51. Cosgrove's

Lancaster was seen to burst into flames and crash close to the airfield, killing all seven crew.[32] Wolfgang Wenning and Feldwebel Gustav Delp his bordfunker were killed on 27 April when they collided with an Oxford near Church Lawford airfield and crashed at Frankton near Rugby.[33]

During March to July 1944 the crews of KG51demonstrated the potential of long-range intruding over East Anglia. They destroyed forty Allied aircraft for the loss of twelve crews and of many a night created chaos and confusion in the skies over England. Meanwhile, Mosquitoes did a little intruding of their own. On the night of 18/19 April Harry White (promoted Flight Lieutenant on 14 April) and Mike Allen of 141 Squadron gave chase during a 'Serrate' patrol to Swinemünde and the western Baltic but their intended victim escaped. Their ninth kill would have to wait just a little longer. Eighteen Mosquitoes operated from West Raynham this night, including ten from 141 Squadron, its best effort so far. White and Allen were one of eight 141 Squadron Mosquito crews dispatched to patrol over France on 20/21 April when Main Force targets included Cologne and three rail targets in France, as part of the preparations for what was to be the Normandy invasion and one in Belgium. Some 247 Lancasters and 22 Mosquitoes were despatched to the rail target at La Chapelle just north of Paris and 175 aircraft attacked Lens, while fourteen Stirlings attacked a rail depot at Chambly. Meanwhile, 196 aircraft attacked rail yards at Ottignies in Belgium.[34]

Harry White wrote: 'We took off and set course over base at 6,000 feet at 2252 hours and continued uneventfully on course until 2350 hours when our first 'Serrate' contact was obtained to starboard and below, crossing starboard to port. We gave chase going downhill and obtained an AI contact at 12,000 feet range, which was found to be jinking considerably. Height was decreased to 12,000 feet and range closed to 1,500 feet when Senate and Al contacts faded. We turned starboard and back to port hoping to regain contact - no joy. Enemy aircraft switched off 'Serrate' as we broke away. Throughout this attempted interception our elevation was behaving most erratically and it is believed that the enemy aircraft was directly below us at 1,500 feet when contact faded, the usual reason for fading blips.

'The gyro having spun during the interception, I had little idea of where this interception had taken me, so set course towards the estimated position of Paris, which I hoped shortly to see illuminated and fix my position. At 0020 hours various contacts were obtained on the bomber stream leaving the Paris area. 'Window' was much in evidence. At 0025 hours an AI contact at 15,000 feet to port and below was obtained a few miles west of stream and chased. We decreased height and followed contact through gentle port and starboard orbits reducing height to 12,000 feet and eventually closing range to 600 feet where I obtained a visual on four blue-white exhausts, later positively identified at 300 feet as a Ju 88. For five minutes I followed enemy aircraft patiently through gentle port and starboard orbits at 200

indicated air speed, eventually opening fire, still turning, at 500 feet with a one-second burst allowing 5° deflection; no results. Enemy aircraft, completely clueless, continued to orbit. Apparently clueless also, I tried again with a one-second burst. Again no results. A third burst was fired as enemy aircraft peeled off to starboard and disappeared from view I have no idea why I continually missed enemy aircraft and can only attribute it to the dot dimmed out from the gunsight and gremlin interference.

'At 0100 hours, being in the proximity of the bomber stream, second attack on Paris, we obtained another 'Serrate' contact starboard and below which we followed for three minutes. This 'Serrate' momentarily faded and enemy aircraft was presumed to be orbiting, at least turning. This was confirmed within a few seconds by a head-on AI contact at 15,000 feet range well below. We turned behind and closed rapidly to 600 feet and obtained a visual on four quite bright blue exhausts, identified from 300 feet as a Do 217 now flying at 10,000 feet. Enemy aircraft was now turning very gently port and was followed for five minutes not wishing to repeat above. At 450 feet only exhausts could be seen, though these, unlike the Ju 88, quite clearly. Not wishing to approach closer I opened fire at this range with a two-second burst and was gratified to see enemy aircraft exploded with a blinding flash and disintegrate. Several pieces were flung back at us and I instinctively ducked as they splattered over the windscreen and fuselage. Apart from two broken Perspex panels, which were causing more noise than worry, we appeared to be OK but visions of damaged radiators caused some concern for the first minutes. We had no trouble in that respect and returned uneventfully to base.'

White and Allen's victim was either a Do 217N-1 of 5/NJG4, which crashed near Meulan, north of Paris or a Do 217E-5 of 6./KG100. Oberfeldwebel Karl Kaiser and Unteroffizier Johannes Nagel his bordfunker, both of whom were wounded in the action, bailed out of the first Dornier. Gefreiter Sigmund Zinser, bordschütze was killed. On the second Dornier, Feldwebel Heinz Fernau, Hauptmann 'Willi' Scholl, observer, Unteroffizier Josef Bach, bordfunker and Oberfeldwebel Fritz Wagner, bordmechaniker were killed. The other confirmed victory this night was a Bf 110 in the Ruhr that went to Flight Lieutenant Gordon Cremer and Flying Officer 'Dick' O'Farrell on 169 Squadron, who flew a 'Serrate' patrol in support of the bombers targeting Köln. The 110, which was piloted by Oberleutnant Manfred Tischtau of 14/NJG6 dived away to starboard. Cremer closed astern and gave a short burst at about one hundred to fifty yards' range from slightly above. Strikes were seen instantaneously inboard of the port engine followed by a large flash of flame, which clearly illuminated the cockpit, fuselage and tailplane. It disappeared in flames through the clouds at 10,000 feet and a few seconds later there was an explosion, followed by a red glow on the clouds. (Cremer fired just 40 rounds of 20mm ammunition to down the German aircraft.) Manfred Tischtau, who had four Abschüsse, was

killed. Two Mosquito NF.IIs that were providing Bomber Support, for the Cologne raid and the attacks on rail targets and eight of the bombers failed to return.35 No aircraft were lost on the raid on Ottignies.

On the night of 22/23 April the target for 596 heavies was Düsseldorf. As usual Mosquito bombers were flying a diversion raid (on Mannheim) while 100 Group operated ten RCM sorties and dispatched nineteen 'Serrate' and seven intruder patrols over the continent to hunt for enemy night fighters. Two Mosquito NF.II crews on 169 Squadron were successful. Twenty-two year old Welshman, Pilot Officer Wilfred Handel 'Andy' Miller and his radar operator Pilot Officer 'Freddie' Bone, a 38-year-old policeman from Birkenhead claimed a Bf 110 at Cologne for their fifth victory. In 1943 when sergeants on 125 Squadron they had destroyed a Do 217 and two Ju 88s flying Beaufighter VIs. Both were commissioned and in October 1943 they were posted to 169 Squadron. Their first kill in 100 Group was a Bf 110 on 5/6 February 1944. Flight Lieutenant Ronald George 'Tim' Woodman and Flying Officer Patrick Kemmis claimed a Bf 110 in the Bonn area southeast of Cologne for their third victory, as Woodman recalls:

'The Y-Service'[36] had informed us that when the bombers were approaching targets in northern Germany and the Ruhr, night-fighter squadrons in the Munich area were being directed to the suspected target area. On this night, therefore, I flew from the Ruhr towards Munich as the bombers approached the Ruhr We picked up a 'Serrate' contact coming towards us and when it was within AI range turned port and came up underneath him. He had not spotted us on his radar. It was a 110 with a small white light on his tail and he was probably escorting Me 109 'Wilde Sau' fighters to the bombers' target area as there were four other aircraft flying in formation with him, two to port and two to starboard. I switched on the gunsight but it did not light up. I changed the bulb and it still did not work. I banged the sight with my gloved fist and the socket and bulb fell out on its lead, blinding me with its brilliant white light as it lit up. I switched off and fired a short burst at the 110 tail light but with no strikes. We were fast approaching the Ruhr searchlight zone so I fired a longer burst, stirring the stick as I did so to spread the shells. There were a number of strikes and the 110 seemed to have blown up. Black sooty oil covered my windscreen (and when we got back we found the nose and starboard wing damaged). Pat, on radar, said that he could see large pieces going. (Seeing their escort aircraft shot down they would all have dived down to ground level, not knowing what was behind them. Maybe this is what Pat Kemmis saw on radar). Now the Ruhr searchlights were after us and I did not want them to recognize me as a Mosquito. The Y-Service came to my aid. I reached back and pressed the trigger of a fixed Very pistol. Red and green Very lights spread across the night sky. The searchlight crews counted them and doused their searchlights. I had fired off the German 'colours of the day' using information supplied by the Y-Service. It was the only time I did so.'

All told, 1st Jagdkorps, which had reacted to the mass raid by

despatching 294 sorties, lost only seven fighters while claiming no less than 42 victories. In fact 37 RAF bombers were lost. One of these was Halifax III MZ578 'I-Ink' on 76 Squadron at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, a bleak wartime airfield with very few comforts flown by 26-year old Squadron Leader 'Stan' Somerscales DFC, which had crossed Belgium and began to move up Holland between Maastricht and Aachen. Suddenly there was a soft muffled thud. Pilot Officer Sid Stephen was in his normal position as flight engineer directly behind the pilot when the Halifax was hit by a Bf 110G-4 night-fighter with 'Schräge Musik' cannon, piloted by Oberfeldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3 for his 43rd 'kill', which Frank claimed as a 'Lancaster' .'Schräge Musik' seems to have been a secret kept just as well by the Air Ministry in late 1943 and early 1944, as it was by the Germans. Certainly, very few operational aircrews were made aware of this type of attack at the time. Three voices including the skipper's and Stephen's cried out, 'What was that?' For probably no more than two or three seconds there was silence. Then Flight Sergeant Harry Poole the mid-upper shouted, 'The wing's on fire!' Again, silence, which was quickly shattered by Somerscales' order: 'Bail out!' Flying Officer S. I. 'Tom' Wingham, bomb aimer, who had completed his first tour on 102 Squadron in June 1943, continues:

'It was an order, which one did not have to agonize over. A fire in an engine or in the fuselage could be dealt with by fire extinguishers but with hundreds of gallons of high-octane petrol in each wing it did not need much imagination to visualize the inevitable end. I looked up into the cockpit. Jack Reavill, who had keyed a distress call to base and then half clipped his parachute on as he made his way up to the cockpit, was standing there with the pilot's parachute, which he was trying to clip on the Stan's harness. Behind him was a dull red glow and smoke was drifting in from the fuselage. To give Stan a lighter aircraft I jettisoned the bomb load, hoping to make the aircraft easier to handle while everyone got out. That done, it was time to go! I threw off my oxygen mask and helmet, clipped on my parachute and turned to help Jim Lewis remove the escape hatch just behind me under the seat where he had been sitting. Being new, the hatch was proving troublesome but the combined effort of the two of us quickly overcame the problem and we dropped the hatch into the night. Jim Lewis crashed into trees on the edge of some woods and with his parachute caught in the branches he was still a number of feet from terra firma. As I dropped through the hatch I felt a bit muzzy and so I pulled the ripcord almost immediately. The last thing I remember was the black bulk of the port wing above and then nothing until I awoke on the ground.

'There was an explosion, one of the wings broke away and the aircraft went into a spin, rendering those left in the aircraft helpless in the grip of 'G' forces. Sid Stephen, who was levering at the hatch with his feet, was thrown out into space but Harry Poole the mid-upper gunner was trapped in the fuselage and he never left the aircraft. Flight Sergeant

John Rowe had great difficulty in getting out of the rear turret, which had to be rotated to the 'fore and aft' position for bailing out. Finally he did it manually and then putting his hands behind his back he slid open the turret and bulkhead doors to find his chute in the rack, undipped it and pulled it over his head into the turret. Once he fell clear Rowe pulled the cord and the noise, smoke and flame suddenly stopped. He was only just in time, as he had but a few hundred feet left but he broke one knee and badly damaged the other. Another explosion threw Reavill clear. He woke up to find himself in space with no parachute on his chest and then he realized that it was there but it was attached by only one strap. Reaching over his shoulder and grabbing the strap he drew it back and pulled the ripcord. Barely had the canopy opened when he hit trees in Wachelder woods. Somerscales had probably been blown clear by the same explosion, as he was found dead not far from the aircraft with his parachute streamed out in the trees above him.[37]

Somerscales' Halifax was one of sixteen lost on the raid. Thirteen Lancasters also failed to return. Hauptmann Ernst-Wilhelm Modrow of I./NJG1 at Venlo flying a He 219 destroyed three Lancasters. His second and third victims were probably Halifaxes LW633 on 425 'Alouette' Squadron RCAF thirty kilometres southeast of Gilze-Rijen at 0155 and LV780 on 424 'Tiger' Squadron RCAF 25 kilometres southeast of Gilze-Rijen at 0204 hours. Warrant Officer2 Joseph Paul Guy Brisson RCAF and three of his crew were killed. LV780, which was being flown by Warrant Officer2 Wilfred Ferdinand Vornbrock RCAF crashed at Goirle in Noord-Brabant with no survivors. Major Hans Karlewski of 2./NJG1 and Unteroffizier Heinz Filipzig of 4./NJG1 and 23-year old Oberleutnant Johannes Hager of 6./NJG1 (both flying from Ste-Dizier) each claimed a Halifax. Leutnant Hans Zettel of 2./NJG6 at Illesheim downed a Lancaster at 0138 hours ten kilometres northwest of Düsseldorf.

By the third week of April Leutnant Otto Fries of II./MJG1 had nine confirmed Abschüsse[38] but as Technical Officer he was responsible for the state of aircraft serviceability, which at the time was lacking and time spent on solving the problem meant that he could not fly operationally. However, he and his commander reached a tacit agreement that he could fly on operations during the moonless period and only remain grounded during the moon phase. During this period Fries had 'Schräge Musik' installed in his Bf 110 G9+CC. Fries was very pleased when, on the evening of Tuesday 18 April, he was again able to drive out for readiness with the operational crews. They soon took off as a railway station in the vicinity of Paris was being attacked. But the order for take-off came much too late and the Y-control was extremely poor because interference made communication with ground control almost impossible. They hung around and could see the fires and explosions, but by the time they had arrived it was all over - the attack had only lasted a few minutes.

On Thursday 20 April 'increased readiness' was ordered because of the 'historic occasion' (Hitler's birthday). Towards 2230 Fries and Staffa went to cockpit readiness and at 2246 Fries opened the throttles, without

being troubled by long-range night fighters. This night too their communications were interfered with, they were sent around Paris, Rheims and Metz; saw 'Christmas trees' and bombing far away and landed again at 0142 at Ste-Dizier - having achieved nothing. On Friday 21 April they remained in their quarters as the weather was very bad, but on the following evening they again went out to readiness. It was 'Zahme Sau' again, although this had not worked properly on the past few nights. Fries' returned with a claim for his tenth Abschuss. It was Stirling EH942 on 218 Squadron at Woolfox Lodge - one of three lost from the 48 included in a force of 181 bombers attacking the railway yards at Laon, near Rheims with devastating effect. The combat took place at 5000 metres south-west of Soissons in Northern France between 2338 and 2358 hours. The skipper, 30-year old Squadron Leader Cecil Wardman Poulter MiD and one of the air gunners were killed. The five other crew members evaded capture. Four Lancasters and two Halifaxes were also shot down on this raid.

On 23/24 April four Halifaxes and a Stirling failed to return from 'Gardening' operations carried out by 114 aircraft in five areas of the Baltic. Among claims for seven kills was a Halifax at radio beacon 'Chameleon' by Leutnant Otto Fries of 5./NJG1 and a Viermot at Laaland Island by Oberfeldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3. Twenty-six year old Hauptmann Werner Husemann of Stab 1./NJG3 also claimed a Viermot at Laaland Island. Husemann was born on 10 November 1919 in Schötmar/Lippe. From 1941 until late 1942 he had served with a weather reconnaissance squadron before transferring to the Stab of NJG1. He claimed his first aerial victory on the night 17/18 August 1942. His number of victories had increased to seventeen by the end of 1943; among them three Lancasters shot down on the night of 25/26 June. He was appointed Staffelkapitän of 7./NJG1 on 1 October and was awarded the German Cross in Gold on 24 October and the Ehrenpokal der Luftwaffe on 1 November. Oberleutnant Berger of 2./NJG3 claimed a Viermot north of Schleswig. Leutnant Herbert Koch of 12./NJG3 claimed a '4-mot' at Faborg. Leutnant Walter Briegleb of 10./NJG3 claimed a Halifax fifteen kilometres south of Agerso. Oberleutnant Arnold 'Fritz' Brinkmann of 8./NJG3 claimed a Halifax in the Falster Island area. Flight Lieutenant Graham J. Rice and Pilot Officer Ron Mallett on 141 Squadron, one of four Mosquito 'Serrate' patrols despatched, shot down a FW 190 employing 'Zahme Sau' tactics against RAF bombers carrying out mine-laying in the Baltic. It was Rice's second victory on the squadron. On 30/31 January he had shot down a Bf 110G-4 piloted by Oberfeldwebel Werner Hellenbrucks of 3./NJG1 which crashed into the River Wesser north of Blexen. Hellenbrucks, who had three Abschüsse, was killed.

When on the night of Monday 24th/Tuesday 25th April 637 aircraft bombed Karlsruhe and 234 Lancasters and sixteen Mosquitoes raided Munich, 100 Group flew eleven RCM, 21 'Serrate' and eight Intruder Bomber Support sorties for the raid on Munich which cost nine

Lancasters. Eleven Lancasters and eight Halifaxes from the Karlsruhe raid were lost while two OTU Wellingtons went missing on a diversionary sweep over the North Sea by 165 aircraft. Nachtjagd claimed 28-31 kills with Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer destroying four Viermots over Belgium for his 53rd-56th victories. At 0203 he shot down Lancaster I HK542 'J-Johnnie' on 115 Squadron near Alken.

There were no survivors on Flight Sergeant Peter Anthony Bennett's crew. Twenty-five minutes later, three kilometres (1.9 miles) north of Mechelen he destroyed a second Lancaster on 115 Squadron when he shot down DS734 'Y-Yoke'. All on Flight Sergeant Robert Roland Cagienard's crew were killed. At 0230 Schnaufer destroyed Halifax III LW622 'R-Robert' on 192 Squadron one kilometre (0.62 miles) west of Haasdonk. Flying Officer Charles William Cecil Crowdy RCAF and his crew died. Ten minutes later he shot down a second Halifax into the sea.

Although pre-invasion targets were the main priority, Bomber Command continued its attacks on German cities. There was a new moon on Wednesday 26 April and the weather briefing in eastern England predicted broken, medium stratocumulus cloud when 493 aircraft set out for Essen and another 206 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes of 5 Group and nine Lancasters of 1 Group headed for the ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt. Another 217 aircraft were given the rail yards at Villeneuve-Ste-Georges as their target. One of the 5 Group Lancasters that took part in the raid on Schweinfurt was Lancaster III JB601 'V-Victor' on 106 Squadron skippered by 28-year old Squadron Leader Tony O'Shea Murdoch RNZAF, who took off from Metheringham at 2141 hours. At around the same time in the French villages around Ugny-sur-Meuse, families were preparing to retire for the night. Almost every night RAF bombers flew overhead on bombing operations to and from Germany so no-one paid much attention in spite of the deafening humming of their engines. Andre Schwalbach just slept and slept well as anyone does at the age of seventeen. Rène Petitcolas, another 17-year old, was soon asleep in the kitchen alcove of his family's house in Ugny.

Over Dijon, southwest of Ste-Dizier at 0047 hours, Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt of 8./NJG1 found a Lancaster at a height of 4400 metres. It was LL919 'W-William' on 619 Squadron which 22-year old Flight Lieutenant Guy Gunzi had taken off from Dunholme Lodge at 2132 hours. Gunzi and three other original members on his crew had flown a total of sixteen operations together. Schmidt blasted the 'Lanki' with his guns and it caught fire, circling the small hamlet of Landéville twice before hitting a wooded hillside. Flames lit up the night sky so that it was bright as day. Flight Sergeant James 'Jack' Mills the 27-year old bomb aimer was the only survivor. His parachute saved him although it was not fully inflated when he was thrown out of the aircraft. Mills jaw was fractured in two places and he suffered broken ribs, a compressed spine and cuts and bruises. He remained unconscious throughout the night. Later, he was taken by the Germans to hospital

first in Chaumont nineteen miles northeast and then Ste-Dizier. In hospital he was visited by Dietrich Schmidt. Mills could not remember much about him but he seemed 'OK!' He was given excellent treatment and the Germans even took him to Paris to have his jaw injuries treated by a specialist. When he had recovered sufficiently, sometime after D-Day Mills was sent to Stalag Luft VII at Bankau where he remained to the end of the war. The six other members of the crew were laid to rest in Landéville churchyard.[39]

At Schweinfurt the low-level marking provided for the first time by Mosquitoes on 627 Squadron was not accurate. The first spot fires fell south of the River Main and were followed by others still further off the mark. The Lancasters found no cloud and stronger than forecast high-level winds delayed them and the marker aircraft. The master bomber made every effort to redeem the situation by instructing aircraft to overshoot the green markers but he was poorly received and the attack became concentrated to the south of the target area. The delay en route enabled the German night fighter force to carry out fierce attacks throughout the period of the raid. II./NJG5 and I. and II./NJG6 despatched 33 'Tame Boar' Bf 110s against the stream heading for Schweinfurt. Two Bf 110s of I./NJG6 were lost to flak and return fire (Flying Officer William Ransom 'Bright-Eyes' Breithaupt RCAF of Kitchener, Southern Ontario and Flying Officer J. A. 'Jimmy' Kennedy on 239 Squadron shot down a Bf 110 in the Essen area for the first of their five victories). Squadron Leader John Charles Noel Forshaw and his navigator Pilot Officer Frank Smith Folley on 141 Squadron failed to return. The Nachtjagd crews returned with eight Abschüsse plus three 'probables'. At Asten near Eindhoven Ritterkreuzträger Oberfeldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3 at Vechta flying a Bf 110G-4 armed with 'Schräge Musik' cannon claimed his 45th and final Abschuss, Lancaster III ND873 on 12 Squadron, before he and his crew were hit by debris from their quarry. Pilot Officer George Edwin Nicholls and crew were killed. Frank and Oberfeldwebels' Schierholz and Schneider crashed to their deaths. (Frank was posthumously promoted to Leutnant at the end of April on Hitler's birthday).

'J-Johnny' flown by Pilot Officer Cyril Bishop, one of five missing aircraft on 106 Squadron, was attacked by 30-year old Hauptmann Walter Bornschein, a former bomber ace of KG2 and CO of that unit, who commanded 1 Führerkurrierstaffel, Hitler's personal transport unit. Bornschein had taken off from München-Riem, apparently on a whim, with two other pilots and was flying a Ju 88. Sergeant Bill Stevens the Canadian rear-gunner, a former printer known on the Squadron as 'Eagle Eye', opened fire at the exact moment Bornschein fired. Both aircraft went down. The Ju 88 crashed near a flak battery on the edge of Schweinfurt. All three crew were killed. Bornschein had flown 225 combat sorties. Only Flight Sergeant Bob Burns the navigator and Jack Pickstone the bomb aimer got out of the Lancaster and they were taken prisoner. Bishop, Stevens and the two other crew men were killed. 'O-

Orange' too was shot down. For his actions on board the aircraft Sergeant Norman 'Jacko' Jackson was awarded the Victoria Cross, although this was not promulgated until after the war.

Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann of 8./NJG4 had taken off from Juvincourt at 2334 hours in his Bf 110 on a Zahme Sau (Tame Boar) sortie in search of his 26th Abschüsse. He recalled: 'Y-reports guided me into the bomber stream near Ste-Dizier. Günther Hauthal my bordfunker gave me a running commentary of SN-2 readings. Towards 0047 hours I spotted the first enemy aircraft (4-mot, twin fin) ahead and about 400 metres above. Enemy height, 4800 metres. At 0048 hours I attacked from below at 100 metres range. The aircraft caught fire at once in the starboard wing with a bright flame. At 0050 hours I observed the crash fire. Bergmann's victim, a 'Lanki', was 'V-Victor' on 106 Squadron which he shot down over Laneuville-á-Bayard, fifteen kilometres south east of Ste-Dizier. Squadron Leader Tony Murdoch, who was from Christchurch, Canterbury in New Zealand and his six crew, which included Sergeant Len Izod the 19-year old flight engineer, who was from Southend-on-Sea, were killed. Only Sergeant H. Bradley the second pilot, who was on his 'Second Dickie' trip, survived. He broke a leg and was captured.

Bergmann's bordfunker then picked up another enemy contact thirty kilometres east of Ste-Dizier as Bergmann recalled: 'My radio operator guided me at once onto a fresh target with his SN-2. Visual contact with 4-mot at 0055 hours, ahead about 500 metres above and with navigation lights on. Enemy height, 4300 metres. At 0056 hours I fired from below at the starboard wing. The markings 'EA-D' were clearly recognisable. I observed the crash fire at 0057 hours.' It was another Lancaster; JB679 on 49 Squadron captained by Pilot Officer Robert Montgomery. All on board were killed and they are buried in Bure churchyard.

'At once Günther Hauthal reported another target four minutes' flight time - 20 kilometres away.' wrote Bergmann. It was LL908, 'H-Harry' one of three 49 Squadron Lancasters at Fiskerton that was lost on this operation and flown by 21-year old Pilot Officer John Russell Dickinson. Many on the squadron thought that Johnny Dickinson and crew, (who loved flying their Lancaster at very low-level on training flights) had been blessed with that precious bomber crew commodity 'luck' and were sure that they would get through their tour. After surviving so many close calls in the earlier part of their tour, the 'reaper' had finally got them on their 25th operation. Only a month earlier, on 30/31 March, Dickinson's crew had brought 'H-Harry' safely back from Nuremberg.

'I spotted the enemy, 4-mot, twin fin, about 500-600 metres ahead and above' wrote Bergmann. 'Enemy height 4000 metres. At about 0059 hours I fired from below at the starboard wing. A bright fire broke out at once. I observed the crash fire [thirty kilometres southeast of Toul] at 0101 hours.'[40] This third Abschuss of the night took Bergmann's score overall to 28.

René Peticolas, asleep in the kitchen alcove, was woken up by an astounding noise and explosions when the Lancaster crashed. 'The sky lit up as if the sun was hitting on the window panes. It lasted quite a long while. I thought, 'The house is on fire.' The whole family got up and everyone ran to the end of the garden. Almost everyone from the village was there. In the meadow, near the Grande Voute, it was like a fireworks display. Lights and explosion all at once. G. Vincenot, my neighbour, shouted, 'An aircraft has crashed and bombs are exploding.' My mother screamed, 'Our oxen! The bombs are going to kill our oxen! It's next door to our meadow.' At one o'clock in the morning she ran towards the aircraft on fire. Without our three oxen we had no means to do our work on the farm because the horses had been requisitioned by the German army. My mother returned fairly quickly. She had not been able to get near, the bombs never stopped exploding. The oxen were still alive. Other people also tried to get near to see if the airmen were inside the aircraft but it was impossible to tell as it was too dangerous. The villagers of Ugny gradually returned to their homes.

André Schwalbach learned about the crash the following morning whilst taking the cows to the fields. 'I saw smoke and a gathering of German soldiers, who had been informed by a collaborator, securing the area and the wreck of the Lancaster, shouting, 'Heruas, Heraus'. ('Outside', 'Outside'.) We did not resist. From a distance we could see some of the bodies that appeared to be intact. Five were in the cabin and two were outside because they had tried to parachute out, but they were flying too low and their chutes did not open. My father, Alex, who spoke German, was requisitioned by Monsieur Gilbert the Mayor of Ugny to go to the place where the plane had crashed and he gave me further details. The Lancaster had exploded in flight. The engines and debris from the aircraft was found as far away as two miles from the impact point. The villagers were very scared. They were sorry for the young men, yet at the same time they were relieved that the aircraft had not crashed onto the village. My father was worried because he was hiding a young man from Alsace, a resistance fighter from the 'Malgre Nous' (In spite of us) who had been forced to join the Hitler Youth and had fled. Some false papers had been made for him in Vaucoulers by Monsieur Pink, a Resistance fighter. Later that day my father had had the courage to refuse an order that the airmen's bodies be buried in a mass grave without any funeral. He declared the seven airmen would be buried as soldiers, not like animals and so the Municipality bought seven coffins. My father heard a German saying to others, 'The old man isn't scared', but he was trembling because he was afraid of any possible revenge. The seven bodies were placed on a cart and pulled by horses and the Germans escorted them to the burial site. The funeral was held the next day in Ugny-sur-Meuse churchyard. French guards watched in case the Germans should return but the funeral was held with much emotion and without any incident.'[41]

Seven white headstones in a neat line mark where all seven lie at

peace in Cemetery. Sergeant Robert Hall Hudson the 21year old rear gunner's DFM was Gazetted on 9 May 1944, the citation paying tribute to his determination and fearless attitude when faced with great danger. Sergeant John 'Jack' Ellenor the 33-year old mid-upper gunner had penned a poignant last letter to his four-year old daughter, Barbara in which he said:

'You will know that your daddy was taken from you while fighting to help free the world from the evil influence which forced this war upon an otherwise peace-loving world. I want you to know, dear, that your Daddy fought and died for what he considered to be right, that you and others like you can grow up in a world which is clean and decent. That everyone may think as they please and speak what they think, that they may live cleanly and decently, that is what we are fighting for... We had planned to do a lot of things for you Barbara, but God decreed that your Mother should undertake this responsibility without my help, so I want you to do all you can to help her. I expect the time will come when you will marry and then your mother will be alone and if that time comes I know you will not forget her...'[42]

Altogether, 21 Lancasters were lost on Schweinfurt. The 493 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Mosquitoes that headed for Essen meanwhile, carried out an accurate attack thanks to good ground-marking by the Path Finder Force. Six Lancasters and a Halifax were shot down. Twenty-two-year old 'Experte' Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer claimed two of the kills for his 58th and 59th Abschüsse. At 0205 he destroyed Lancaster III JB307 GT-H on 156 Squadron one kilometre (0.62 miles) south of Achtmaal in the Netherlands. Twenty-four year old Flight Lieutenant Anthony George Randall Kayll and crew were killed. Thirteen minutes later Schnaufer shot down Lancaster II DS719 LQ-U on 408 'Goose' Squadron RCAF over the sea. There were no survivors on 23-year old Flying Officer Everett Raymond Rognan RCAF's crew. Among them was the 24-year old navigator, 1st Lieutenant Frank S. Shove of the US 8th Air Force who had been attached to the unit at RAF Linton-on-Ouse to gain combat experience. Initially he was buried locally at Wissenkerke, being removed to the US Military Cemetery at Margraten at war's end. His body was finally brought home and laid to rest at Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut.

On 27/28 April NJG5 and NJG6 again struck hard against a stream of 322 Lancasters heading for Friedrichshafen. Thirty-one Bf 110s and three Luftbeobachter (air situation observer) Ju 88s were successfully guided into the stream via radio beacon 'Christa' and they wreaked havoc. Thirteen confirmed victories plus a probable were credited to I./NJG6, a Ju 88 Luftbeobachter crew and to Austrian-born Hauptmann Leopold 'Poldi' Fellerer of II./NJG5. In all the Friedrichshafen force lost eighteen Lancasters. ND781 GI-R on 622 Squadron, skippered by Flight Lieutenant James Andrew Watson RCAF was at about 20,000 feet and approaching the turning point before the run into the target when the first attack came from dead astern and under the tail by three Ju 88s. Ron Hayes, mid-upper gunner, recalls:

'The attack was a complete surprise; there was no moon, just complete darkness. As the aircraft was attacked, from the rear thuds were heard at the rear and flashes and the port elevator was badly buckled. Flight Sergeant M. D. MacKinnon our Canadian rear gunner was out of communications and could not direct the pilot on evasive manoeuvres, so I took control of directing the pilot with evasive direction. From the bursts of fire, they were under attack by at least two attacking aircraft and the gunner could not see them, so he decided to have the aircraft keep on course, rather than attempting to dive away from the attacking aircraft, which was what the attackers would be expecting. A second attack from dead astern upper, hit the starboard elevator and starboard inner undercarriage which burst into flames. As the attacking aircraft was coming in closing in from the starboard quarter level and at about 350 yards the pilot was directed to corkscrew to starboard. The immediate evasive action, even with the badly buckled port elevator showed that this experienced pilot had the aircraft under full control. His response to evasive direction was magnificent, but the aircraft was hit about the starboard inner engine and a second later this portion of the wing burst into flames. The first impression was that the starboard inner engine was on fire but from dialogue between crew members in the cockpit, it was determined that the fire extinguisher system had been activated. The pilot was in full control of the aircraft, but the fire did not die out as was hoped for by the crew. The danger of flames was increasing all the time and the captain side slipped the aircraft to keep them away as much as possible, as the aircraft kept losing height at the same time.

'The flames were causing the seam aft of the starboard inner engine to melt and the pilot was informed of this, who then ordered everyone to collect their parachutes. The aircraft continued to lose height and the flames had enveloped most of the wing and half of the seam had melted, the pilot was informed of this and he ordered everyone to bail out. I then plugged into the intercom system and informed the pilot that he was bailing out and that the rear gunner was still in his turret and he would let him know we were getting out. The captain's last words to me were, 'Yes, OK, but hurry, we're at 4,500 feet, if he's not hit he might make it. So long Ron, good luck.'

'I then opened the bulkhead door leading to the rear turret and saw MacKinnon turn his head towards me. I patted my parachute to indicate that we were bailing out and he understood. The aircraft was now at about 4,000 feet when I bailed out. The pilot had the aircraft under perfect control, it was still losing height in a sinking fashion and the flames had enveloped the fuselage alongside the burning wing.'

On fire, ND781 crashed near the railway station at Sint Hippolyte (Haut-Rhin), 18 kilometres north of Colmar. Watson remained at the controls of the stricken Lancaster while his crew parachuted to safety.[43]

After landing by parachute Ron Hayes was captured and taken by two Luftwaffe Intelligence Officers to Colmar, where he was

interrogated. 'After the usual questions, I was asked if I could help them in identifying the belongings of a dead pilot. The items were those of Flight Lieutenant Watson in an envelope, consisting of his identification bracelet and a ring. I knew that the ring had been given to Jimmy Watson by his father. The Germans said that they had taken the articles from a dead pilot, who was found dead in the pilot's seat of a Lancaster. I said nothing to them for fear that it might be the beginning of a long interrogation and I also knew that the identity bracelet was sufficient.'[44]

Oberfeldwebel Werner Meier of 4/NJG4 flying a Bf 110G-4 was killed as a result of return fire from one of the bombers he was attacking. Unteroffizier Hille, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Christian Sabel, bordschütze, bailed out safely before the Messerschmitt crashed at Beaujeuz near Dijon. Sabel died of his injuries later. Mosquito crews on 239 Squadron landed back at West Raynham and submitted claims for three enemy aircraft destroyed. Squadron Leader Victor Lovell DFC and his navigator Warrant Officer Robert Lilley DFC failed to return from their patrol to Stuttgart/Friedrichshafen. I Jagddivision's casualty figures for the period 21-28 April were 71 night-fighter aircraft lost, or almost 20 per cent of its total first-line battle strength. By 28 April I Jagddivision had only 378 aircraft and crews ready for action. 100 Group RAF was partly responsible for bringing this about, turning Nachtjagd from hunters into the hunted with both its highly efficient radio and radar countermeasures campaign and the Mosquito screening of the bomber formations. In spring 1944 the Germans made huge advances in preventing the jamming of their radar sets and SN-2 was fully operational. RAF Bomber Command was almost completely limited to continual attacks by Mosquitoes. German night fighter crews developed a healthy respect for the twin engined British fighter, which late in 1944 developed into what became known as 'Moskitopanik'. German pilots now flew very low, or at Ritterkreuz Height. If they flew higher they would never survive to receive their Knight's Cross. This caused many accidents and German night fighters often flew into the ground.[45]

Wim Johnen, who in March had been made Staffelkapitän of 6./NJG5, had claimed three victories during 1943 to add to five in 1942 and in January 1944 he claimed seven more victories, including three Lancaster bombers on the night of the 27th/28th. Then, on the night of 15/16 February when almost 890 aircraft dropped 2,642 tons of bombs on Berlin, he downed a Viermot southeast of Damgarten and two Lancasters. Altogether, 43 bombers failed to return.

On the night of 27/28 April Johnen, now 23 years old, took off from Hagenau airfield in Alsace at 0048 hours in the almost new Bf 110G-4 (C9+EN), which was equipped with the latest Lichtenstein C-1 SN-2b airborne intercept radar and oblique 20mm cannon armament to intercept the bombers of the Friedrichshafen force near Nancy. Besides the 32-year-old funker, Leutnant 'Brinos' Kamprath, the 'Schräge Musik' guns were manned by their 27-year-old designer Oberfeldwebel Paul Mahle. At the funker's feet lay a briefcase full of top-secret documents

concerning the German air network all across Europe, giving details of codes and the daily recognition signs for the coming month of May, which had been taken along contrary to regulations when the alarm sounded so unexpectedly and the fighter took to the air.

Johnen claimed a 'Halifax' near Strasbourg in eastern France as his 17th victory. Actually, it was Lancaster III ND759 'R-Robert' on 35 Squadron, one of the Path Finder aircraft on the Friedrichshafen raid, flown by Warrant Officer 'Bob' Peter RAAF who had set off from Graveley at 2221 hours. The crew had been on Halifaxes on 51 Squadron and it was mainly due to the skill and accuracy of the Australian bomb aimer, Flight Sergeant Noel Davis, a former bank clerk of Sydney, that they were selected for Path Finder duties. 'R-Robert' was hit in a head-on attack by a night-fighter fifty miles from the target and the starboard engine caught fire. Peter feathered the propeller and in the evasive action that followed he lost a thousand feet and approached Friedrichshafen at 16,000 feet. Davis dropped the bombs and they set course for home on three engines. A short while later 'R-Robert' was attacked again, by Wilhelm Johnen. This time the cockpit filled with smoke and the Lancaster failed to respond to the normal correcting action. Bob Peter gave the order to abandon the aircraft. Sergeant 'Bob' Brereton the flight engineer and Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Grant Foulkes RAAF the 28-year old navigator jumped but the bomb aimer's parachute had fallen through the front escape hatch used by the two men when they bailed out. Then the smoke began to clear.

'Paddy' Balmer and Irvine 'Vin' Graham the two gunners, despite burns to their hands and face had managed to extinguish the flames and Murray Bartle the wireless operator helped Peter with the controls. Finally he gave the one live starboard Merlin full throttle and cut back completely on the two port engines. It worked and the Lancaster, which was down to 3,000 feet, stopped spinning. With two crewmembers gone, the gunners out of action and their parachutes burnt and the bomb aimer without his 'chute Peter put the ailing bomber down on the Untersee, the narrowest part of Lake Constance at a point between Steckborn in Switzerland and Gaienhofen in Germany with virtually no engine power and pitch darkness. Friedrichshafen was an inferno and the fires cast their reflection on the lake and the surrounding mountains. Incredibly, Peter safely landed the stricken bomber on the lake and everyone escaped before the Lancaster sank. They were all interned by the Swiss. Foulkes was found dead and he was buried in Switzerland at Vevey. Bob Peter, who was repatriated in July 1944, received the DFC.

Johnen's Bf 110G-4 was badly hit and damaged, setting the port engine alight. Paul Mahle gave this account: 'We did not really know where we were because we had already been airborne for a good hour and a half and were flying with our radio equipment switched off, so we had no data on our location. Then things got even worse. Suddenly we were caught by a dozen searchlights that surrounded us with a piercing light... I sent out an emergency signal; a green flare shot up

from below, the reflectors dimmed and the airfield lights switched on, signalling us to land. So it had to be Switzerland after all! I too shot off a green signal, which meant 'We're going to land!' They answered with green and switched the airfield lights on and off to say 'Understood!'

'Naturally we had no intention of landing and tried to slip off northward. Instantly all the lights lit us up bright as day again; we had not been able to outwit them. Again I shot off a red flare, but they would not give in until we dropped our landing gear and were unmistakably seen to be heading in to land on the lighted landing runway. Suddenly I saw huge hangars along the edge of the field with rows of aircraft in between. I told Johnen, who then brought us in for a landing.

'The moment the wheels touched the ground, all the lights on the field went out as if in response to a magic wand and it was pitch-black all around us. Johnen switched on our airborne searchlight and by its light we recognized dense rows of Flying Fortresses and Liberators. Suddenly a powerful searchlight grasped us in front and blinded us. We sped directly past the American bombers. Johnen braked sharply. While we taxied to halt Kamprath tried to trample the equipment in front of his seat with his boots, but this desperate attempt was not very successful. We stood still and suddenly, just as I was dismantling the 'Schräge Musik' guns, there came a knock on the cabin roof above my head. I looked up and someone said in German: 'Please get out, you're in Switzerland. You have been interned.' It was an oberleutnant in the Swiss Air Force. We were at Dübendorf airfield in Zurich.'

That same night, right after the landing, the Swiss authorities routinely handed over the German air crew's personal data to the German military attaché in Switzerland, who in turn reported to Göring, who immediately informed Hitler. The Führer ordered the SS leader, Heinrich Himmler, to have the three airmen liquidated. When Göring got wind of the fact that Himmler had been told to send a murder squad into Switzerland, he personally intervened with Hitler, demanding that the three men be allowed to stand an orderly trial and declaring that he 'would not allow his airmen to be shot down in a neutral country.'

On the morning of Saturday 29 April Gestapo officers were already knocking on the doors of the families of the Me 110 crew. Scrupulous searches were conducted and all available photos and correspondence of the crewmen were confiscated; then the houses were sealed and the men's families taken to prison. Even SS officer Otto Skorzeny, the commando expert who had made a name for himself on 12 September 1943 by liberating Mussolini from his internment in the Campo Imperatore Hotel at the top of the Gran Sasso Mountain and only accessible by cable car from the valley below, was called in on the matter.

Skorzeny gave this account: 'On the eve of a double holiday I was sitting along the Wannsee [lake in southwest Berlin] with some old friends, when suddenly I was summoned to the telephone; it was the Fürhrer's headquarters calling. A crazy thing had happened the night

before and the news had just come out. A Messerschmitt fighter plane carrying the newest type of night radar had apparently missed its way and landed on a Swiss airfield... I was ordered to do everything I could, first, to find out whether it had really been a forced landing or whether the crew had deserted. Second, I was to work out proposals about the quickest way to get the equipment back into German possession, or to destroy it. The Reichsführer SS [Himmler] had been called into the matter too and rang me up shortly after, asking for an ongoing progress report. The Führer's headquarters attributed the greatest importance to the whole affair. Next day we had to fly a courier aircraft to Berchtesgaden to report and to present both proposals in a written form. Schellenberg and I had dictated the reports to my secretary, who had to give up her free Sunday to do the work.' The documents inside the impounded aircraft enabled the Swiss to rapidly penetrate the secret of Lichtenstein SN-2 radar, but they did not reveal it to the Allies.

Ever since late summer of 1943 when Lichtenstein SN-2 became operational and showed its immunity to 'Window' Dr. R. V. Jones and his team had been working to penetrate the new radar's secret. To develop an effective countermeasure he needed to know the megahertz frequency of the new device, but so far none of the fighters equipped with SN-2 had fallen into Allied hands because these fighters had strict orders to operate only over German air space.

Eventually the Me 110 was towed into the remotest corner of the airfield and on the night of 19 May a German agent supervised Swiss combat engineers as they laid explosive charges in and around the 110. Just as a faraway church tower clock struck ten, a huge resounding explosion rent the darkness. A pile of twisted, scorched metal and a few official notes wrote an end to the Me 110 affair. In return for their cooperation, the Swiss were presented with a dozen Bf 109Gs.

The Me 110's three German crewmembers knew nothing of what had happened in Berne and Dübendorf. Later Mahle said: 'After our 'cure residence' was over at last, we were taken secretly to the railroad station still dressed in civilian clothes. To our surprise the station was full of rejoicing Germans who wanted to send us off with flowers and music; but the Consul General and the military attaché were there... On the German side we were received by a couple of Party bigwigs including the National Socialist district leader. The train that was to take us to Berlin was already rolling when a Luftwaffe major forced his way into our compartment with two sub-officers: 'Are you the Johnen crew? Please don't give us any trouble!' They sat down next to us and did not let us out of their sight. Not until we had been delivered to Joseph Schmid, commanding general of night fighters, in Belitz near Berlin, did we learn the whole truth of what had happened to our families and what still awaited us. For three days we were grilled by a hastily convened war court and each of us was interrogated separately until at last everything was cleared up... Then at 1810 hours on 22 May we landed at Hagenau. The whole Gruppe was waiting on the runway and gave a

stormy greeting to the prodigal sons, especially when they learned that we were carrying several thousand Swiss cigarettes in our luggage. Our adventure was over.'[46]

By January 1944 Hans-Joachim Jabs had 45 kills and in March became NJG1 Geschwaderkommodore. On 29 April on final approach to Deelen his Bf 110G night fighter was caught on a daylight air test by a flight of six Spitfire IXs on 132 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Alan Geoffrey Page DFC (an ace with 15 kills). The Spitfires came in at too high a speed and Jabs shot down one Spitfire, flown by 21-year old Pilot Officer Roy Bernard Pullin, which went down in flames, killing the pilot. Another Spitfire flown by Flying Officer J. J. Caulton then attacked Jabs head on, though the heavy forward armament of the 110 took effect and the stricken Spitfire glided around and belly-landed at Deelen. Jabs then conducted a surprise forced landing, quickly scrambling for cover before his aircraft was destroyed by strafing. Jabs was awarded the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves (Eichenlaub zum Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes) on 24 March. He remained Kommodore of NJG1 until the end of the war. He ended his career as an Oberstleutnant with fifty kills, 22 of these being day victories against Allied fighters technically far superior to his Bf 110.[47]

During May-June Bomber Command was, apart from three major raids against German cities towards the end of May, fully committed to destroying the Wehrmacht's infrastructure in France and bomber losses were relatively light. One exception, however, was on 3/4 May when Bomber Command attacked a Panzer depot and training centre at Mailly-le-Camp near Epernay to the east of Paris, about fifty miles south of Rheims, which was reported to house up to 10,000 Wehrmacht troops. (Mailly actually accommodated a Panzer regiment HQ, three Panzer battalions belonging to regiments on the Eastern Front and elements of two more as well as the permanent training school staff). A force of 346 Lancasters and fourteen Mosquitoes of 1 and 5 Groups and two Path Finder Mosquitoes on 617 Squadron (one flown by Wing Commander Leonard Cheshire, the 'Marker Leader') were despatched. The control of the raid in the target area failed to go according to plan. The initial Mosquito low level spot flares were accurate and were well backed up by Lancaster marker aircraft. Cheshire ordered the Main Force, which was orbiting at a holding pattern to the north, to come in and bomb. However, the 'Main Force Controller', Wing Commander Laurence Deane DSO DFC, could not transmit the order because his VHF radio was being drowned by an American forces broadcast and his w/t was not tuned in correctly. Nachtjagd fighters arrived during the delay with deadly results. The main attack eventually began when the Deputy Controller, Squadron Leader E. N. M. Sparks on 83 Squadron took over. A RAF pilot wrote:

'I switched on for the Main Controller's commentary and was surprised to hear him ordering the Main Force to wait, as the target had not yet been marked. The air was really blue with a succession of replies

from the Main Force. I had never before heard R/T indiscipline and this was really the measure of the panic and fear that was abroad that night. This was quite enough for me - I had no intention of joining the crowd round those death-trap markers, so we turned east towards the darker sky...We heard brief snatches of R/T, on one occasion what sounded like an English voice saying, 'For Christ's sake! I am on fire!'

'This was replied to by a rough Australian voice saying: If you are going to die, die like a man - quietly.

'A wing commander came up on the R/T, identified himself and said, 'This has got to stop. Cut your R/T and wait for instructions to bomb.' But the frightened voices continued. 'When the order to bomb was finally given the rush was like the starting gate at the Derby,' recalled a pilot.

FW 190 fighters working without radar but by searchlight and moonlight and the bombers' 'marker flares' destroyed six bombers. All were claimed by I./SKG10, a single-engined fighter-bomber and fast recce unit. One pilot, Feldwebel Otto Heinrich of the 3rd Staffel, claimed three destroyed for his first and only three combat victories. Heinrich was killed on 22 May. Flight Sergeant Leslie Harry 'Lizzie' Lissette RNZAF, the 26-year old pilot of a Lancaster III on 207 Squadron, was attacked by a Focke Wulf 190. A third attack soon finished off the bomber. Tracer hit the port wing, blowing off the dinghy hatch. The dinghy then commenced to inflate and then shot back over the tailplane like a big hoopla ring. Lissette could see down through the wing to the ground. The port undercarriage was partially down. A little later the rear gunner reported a fighter coming in port quarter down. They were hit again in the bomb bay and a small fire started. Lissette, who remained at the controls to the end, was critically injured and he died later in a French hospital.[48]

Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt, Staffelkapitän, 8./NJG1 at Laon-Athies in Bf 110 G9+HS destroyed three Viermots for his 23rd-25th confirmed victories in the night fighting area 'Chamaleon' (south of Compiegne). Schonfeld, his bordfunker got indications on his SN-2 for the first victory ahead of them, which was confirmed as four-engined. Schmidt approached on course passing close to the north of Paris from behind and below and fired at 200 metres range, 2300 metres high, followed by a second burst 'to make sure'. The Viermot burst into flames with bluish-white phosphor fire when the fuel tanks in the port wing were hit and went down vertically to crash beside a village. At 0018 hours Schmidt picked out another bomber - evidently a Lancaster - and opened fire. He caught fire immediately in the fuselage and both inboard engines. The rear gunner fired again but without success. 'Burning bits flew off' reported Schmidt. 'He pulled up and then went down steeply. Our adversary crashed at 0019 hours in an open field beside a small clump of trees, about thirty kilometres and 240° from the target'. His third kill - apparently a Lancaster - occurred at 0046 hours after he fired a first burst from behind, about 200 metres range, followed

by a second one 'to make sure'. The 'Lanki' burned brightly in the port wing and fuselage at 3000 metres, pulled up to port and then went down burning in a shallow dive. Looking around Schmidt saw that they had a heavy trail of coolant from the starboard engine'. He was unable to hold the aircraft on one engine and had to slowly lose altitude. Finally, they were unable to see Laon-Athies and therefore had no choice but to bail out. The Bf 110 and Schmidt both landed in a small wood, the two others in an open field, where both sprained ankles. Time was about 0110. Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt's 23rd victim crashed near Chavanges at 0003 hours, followed by a second Lancaster kill sixteen minutes later near Mailly-le-Camp. His third victory on the night came down near Romilly.

Hauptmann Martin Drewes Kommandeur III./NJG1 took Bf 110G-4/U1 off from Athies-Sur-Laon on what was his 113th operational sortie, with his bordfunker, Unteroffizier Erich Handke. They returned with claims for five Abschusse; all Lancasters - shot down in a forty-minute period which took Drewes score to 34 victories Their final victim was possibly Lancaster EE185 KM-A on 44 Squadron at Dunholme Lodge, which crashed at Dreux with the loss of 29-year old Pilot Officer Allan William Nolan RAAF and his crew. The 'Lanki' almost fell on top of the Bf 110 and Drewes had to dive steeply to avoid his flaming victim.

Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann, Staffelkapitän 8./NJG4 at Juvincourt destroyed six Lancasters in thirty minutes in the vicinity of Champlain and north of Paris for his 29th-34th victories. Three Bf 110s were shot down by Lancaster air gunners. The first, with Feldwebel Kraft and his crew of I/NJG4 at Florennes, went down near Juvincourt on the bombers' outbound route. A second I/NJG4 110 flown by Leutnant Duttmann, crashed at Vitry-le-Francois, eleven miles east of the target. The third, with twenty-year old Leutnant Klaus Helm of 3/NJG4 at Laon at the controls, was probably hit by return fire from a 'Lanki' on 12 Squadron which lost four Lancasters on the raid. The 110 hit the ground at Lardy, fifteen kilometres south of Bretigny. Helm, who had four victories, was killed.

No.5 Group, which supplied nearly all the marker aircraft and the entire first wave, lost fourteen of its 173 Lancasters. No.1 Group, which dispatched 173 Lancasters also, in the second wave of the attack and which were subjected to the greatest delay at Mailly, lost 28 bombers, including five out of seventeen crews on 460 Squadron RAAF at Binbrook. Nos.12, 50 and 101 Squadrons each lost four crews. One Mosquito 'Intruder' and one RCM Halifax were also shot down. Approximately 1,500 tons of bombs were dropped on Mailly and 114 barrack buildings, 47 transport sheds and workshops and some ammunition stores were hit, 218 Germans were killed or missing and 156 were wounded and 102 vehicles were destroyed, including 37 tanks. Damage to the buildings was German assessed as '80 per cent destroyed, 20 per cent worth repairing'. The only French civilian casualties in the village of Mailly nearby occurred when a Lancaster crashed into the house.

On 6/7 May 149 aircraft attacked railway installations at Mantes-La-Jolie, a suburb of Gassicourt, for the loss of two Lancasters and one Halifax. Lancasters and Mosquitoes also raided Sable-sur-Sarthe and 52 Lancasters attacked an ammunition dump at Aubigne for the loss of one bomber. Mosquitoes were out in force too, with 28 of them attacking Ludwigshafen and others, including five to Leverkusen, making 'nuisance' raids on German targets. Squadron Leader Harry Bernard Stephens DFC and Flight Lieutenant Norman Henry Fredman DFC and Mosquito IX ML958 on 109 Squadron who failed to return from the raid on Leverkusen was shot down over Holland at five minutes to midnight by 25-year old Oberleutnant Werner Baake and his bordfunker Unteroffizier Rolf Bettaque of 2./NJG1 in a Heinkel 219A-2 'Uhu' (Bettaque having taken over after the death in combat of Unteroffizier Waldbauer on 27/28 January). Stephens and Fredman were killed. Baake was able to dive on his victim from above and gain enough airspeed to overtake the Mosquito because it was flying below its usual operating altitude.

On 7/8 May 471 sorties were flown to France to bomb five airfields and ammunition dumps and a coastal gun position. Twelve aircraft including seven on the raid on an ammunition dump at Salbris by over sixty Lancasters and Mosquitoes failed to return. The following night, on 8/9 May, rail yards, an airfield and seaplane base and gun battery positions in France and Belgium were bombed in 452 sorties. Once again twelve aircraft were lost; seven of them Halifaxes and four, Lancasters. The largest operation of the night was an attack by 123 aircraft on rail yards at Haine-St-Pierre between the towns of Charleroi and Mons in Belgium, who ran headlong into fighters of IV/NJG1 from Sint-Truiden/Sint-Trond and I/NJG4 at Florennes. Six Halifaxes and three Lancasters were shot down. Several Canadian Halifax and Lancaster squadrons bore the brunt of the losses and 431 'Iroquois' and 432 'Leaside' Squadrons RCAF each lost two Halifax IIIs and 405 'Vancouver' Squadron RCAF at Gransden Lodge were missing two Lancaster IIIs. Halifax III LK798 'A-Apple' on 425 'Alouette' Squadron RCAF at Tholthorpe piloted by Flying Officer Larry White USAAF crashed at Walle-'t Hage (West Vlaanderen) two kilometres southeast of Courtrai. The American pilot was killed - six of the seven crew bailed out and two subsequently evaded. Halifax LW583/L on 432 'Leaside' Squadron RCAF flown by Flying Officer Thomas Russell Martin RCAF crashed at Posthoorn (West Vlaanderen) two kilometres southwest of Courtrai.[49]

Hauptmann Adolf Breves and 24-year old Oberleutnant Georg Hermann Greiner, both of IV./NJG1, each claimed Viermots near Courtrai. Breves took off from Sint Trond at 0317 hours in a Bf 110 and using 'Schräge Musik' attacked what was probably White's Halifax. The port wing burst into flames and the fuel tanks exploded. However, the defensive fire from the bomber's gunners was so intense that Breves was forced to turn away. At this point he lost control of the 110 but he eventually regained control and landed safely back at Sint Trond where he put in a claim for the first of his 17 victories. Greiner's 26th Abschuss

was most likely that of Flying Officer Martin's Halifax. The pilot and two other crew members were killed; two were taken prisoner and Flying Officers D. A. D'Andrea RCAF and L. Panzer RCAF avoided capture. Panzer was captured on 1 August and incarcerated in Sint Gilles prison in Brussels for a time but both he and D'Andrea escaped to England in September.[50]

A second American pilot who died this night was 1st Lieutenant John K. Smith DFC AM*** PH who piloted Halifax MZ598 'J-Johnny' on 426 'Thunderbird' Squadron RCAF at Linton-on-Ouse, which was lost without trace. None on Smith's eight-strong crew survived. This and Lancaster I ME620/C on 35 Squadron flown by Warrant Officer Joseph Charles Kemp, which crashed at Estinnes-au-Val (Hainaut) twelve kilometres ESE of Mons were possibly shot down by Feldwebel Konrad Beyer of 1./NJG4 (who received credit for four Abschüsse on this particular night). Kemp and five of his crew were killed; only the flight engineer survived and he evaded. A third American pilot who died was Flight Lieutenant Robert Frazer Mead RCAF from Detroit, who was piloting Halifax 'X-X-ray' on 431 'Iroquois' Squadron RCAF at Croft. The bomber, which was attacked by a Bf 110G-4 flown by Leutnant Georg Fengler of IV./NJG1 who finished the war with sixteen victories, crashed at 0330 hours, at Ranee (Hainaut) 26 kilometres south-east of Mons. There were no survivors on the crew, which included an Australian and four Canadians. Sergeant Joseph Victor Jacques Gravel RCAF was 18 and Sergeant Derek Vernon Guttridge the flight engineer, just a year older.

Halifax MZ521/T on 431 'Iroquois' Squadron RCAF flown by Flying Officer William Harold Wilson RCAF crashed at Zwevezele (West Vlaanderen) ten kilometres NNE of Roeslare and was shot down by Leutnant Friedrich 'Fritz' Potthast of IV./NJG1. Wilson was killed and four of his crew were taken into captivity while two evaded capture. Potthast, who had eleven Abschüsse, eight of them '4-mots' was killed two weeks later, on 21/22 May during aerial combat, crashing at Sourbrodt-Malmedy. Halifax LW594/G on 432 'Leaside' Squadron RCAF flown by Pilot Officer Stanley Allen Hawkins crashed at Grand Reng (Hainaut) sixteen kilometres southeast of Mons and was shot down by Oberleutnant Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer of IV./NJG1 who, it is likely, requiring two attacks, used 'Schräge Musik' to send the Halifax down in flames[51] for his 62nd Abschuss. Hawkins and two other members of his crew were killed. Two others were taken into captivity; the two gunners evaded. Lancaster III ND347/W on 405 'Vancouver' Squadron RCAF flown by Pilot Officer Arthur E. Darlow crashed at 0340 at Bon-Secours (Hainaut) eighteen kilometres southeast of Tournai.[52]

Lancaster ND587/D on 405 'Vancouver' Squadron RCAF flown by Flight Lieutenant William McLaurin Chase RAAF was shot down by Leutnant Wolfgang Martstaller of 1./NJG4 flying a Bf 110 and crashed at 0345 hours at Gallaix (Hainaut) twelve kilometres east of Tournai with the loss of all seven crew. Martstaller and his radar-operator/air gunner

had taken off from Florennes at 0300 hours. In a letter to his parents on 12 May, Martstaller wrote: 'The sky was fully lit, so we could easily see the Tommy. Our crew saw at least ten bombers. However, we could only concentrate on one aircraft. When I was near him and fired (and my burst of fire bloody well blinded me!) the Schwinehund fired off a flare with a signal pistol, so that an enemy night fighter could post us).'

Tim Woodman and Pat Kemmis on 169 Squadron were aloft in a Mosquito NF.II as Woodman recalls: 'We could clearly see the bombers, as many as ten at a time but no sign of German night fighters. We sniffed around for 109s and 190s over the target area but saw none. I saw three bombers weaving like dingbats up at 6,000 feet. Below the leading bomber was a twin-engined aircraft climbing up to it.' Woodman fired a two-second-burst and Martstaller dived into the darkness, Kemmis following him on 'Serrate'. Martstaller soared up in a steep climb and Woodman fired from 800 yards Woodman continues: 'This time he opted out and took us on a chase across the French countryside at treetop height, not seeing him as he flew away from the moon but following him on 'Serrate'.'

Martstaller wrote: 'I went into a steep dive to almost zero feet (at night!) but still we could not escape from the Mosquito's attention.'

Woodman continues: 'He made the mistake of flying towards the moon and I saw the moonlight glint off his wings. I fired and got some strikes on his fuselage and wings as he flew across a wide-open space, which looked like an aerodrome. He went into a steep turn and firing fifty yards ahead of him to allow for deflection I hit him again. White smoke poured from his port engine and closing to 150 yards I gave him another two seconds burst and hit him again.'

Martstaller concludes: 'I was fortunate to spot a field in which to belly-land. We were slightly injured from shrapnel. When we found that we were OK we then saw a large explosion two miles away from us. Next day this turned out to be my Viermot with seven crewmembers burned to death. We were so happy!'[53]

Endnotes Chapter 4

28 *Memories of RAF Witchford* by Barry and Sue Aldridge (Milton Contact Ltd 2013).

29 *Memories of RAF Witchford* by Barry and Sue Aldridge (Milton Contact Ltd 2013).

30 It is probable that Breissner, who claimed shooting down a Lancaster at Cambridge, shot down Eddy's Lancaster and that Puttfarken shot down 'Jock' Birnie's aircraft. On the night on 22/23 April several more German kills were claimed over Norfolk and Suffolk by the Me 410A-1 Hornisse intruders of II Gruppe, Kampfgeschwader 51 'Edelweiss', again led by the Staffelkapitän of 5./KG51, Major Dietrich Puttfarken. The intruders took off from Soesterberg, Holland to infiltrate a returning USAAF bomber stream over England. Over the North Sea after the official blackout time of 2138 hours the attackers spotted a formation of twin-tailed bombers with their lights on heading for East Anglia. KG51 crews identified their targets and were credited with nine Halifaxes shot down. Two of the victories were credited to Puttfarken while a B-17 and a UEA were also awarded to the unit. However, the 'Halifaxes' were American Liberators returning late from a raid on the Hamm marshalling yards. KG 51 lost two Me 410A-Is and their crews. Oberleutnant Klaus Kruger and Feldwebel Michael Reichardt, his bordfunker in 9K+HP and Hauptmann Dietrich Puttfarken and his bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel 'Willi' Lux in 9K+MN were lost. Just who shot them down is open to conjecture. Three Me 410A-Is were claimed shot down by B-24 gunners. The Me 410 flown by Kruger crashed and exploded in a field at Ashby St. Mary. No trace of Puttfarken and Lux's Me 410 has ever been found. Quite probably they crashed in the North Sea. Puttfarken would have been 24-years old on 30 April.

31 Other airfields that came under attack were Tuddenham near Bury St. Edmunds where another Me 410 dropped 34 5D 10As in a field north east of the village at 0245 hours. At 0210 hours Little Snoring also had a visitor with 8 5D 10As exploding near the main runway. Other areas attacked were Sheringham, Westleton and Hockwood in Norfolk and Mickfield and Stoneham in Suffolk. *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Combat Claims 1939-1945* by John Foreman, Johannes Matthews and Simon Parry (Red Kite 2004)/*Memories of RAF Witchford* by Barry and Sue Aldridge (Milton Contact Ltd 2013).

32 Two Stirlings and a Halifax failed to return from the minelaying operation taking overall losses to 17 for the night.

33 *Intruders over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945* by Simon W. Parry (ARP 2003).

34 Five Fortresses on 214 Squadron, including one captained by the CO, Wing Commander Desmond J. McGlinn DFC flew their first jamming operation this night. The Squadron's role was to jam the night fighter controllers on the ground and the German night-fighters in the air. Among other countermeasures, they also jammed the FuG 216 'Neptun' tail warning system.

35 Flight Lieutenant G. R. Morgan (evaded) and Flight Sergeant D. Bentley (PoW) on 169 Squadron in DD616 were lost on the Köln raid. Squadron Leader Ernest William Kinchin and Flying Officer Douglas Sellors on 239 Squadron (both KIA) who had downed a Bf 110 near Frankfurt a month earlier were in the 2nd 'Serrate' Mosquito (HJ644) lost. They were last heard on R/T at 0220 hours, 'We are OK now'. (HJ644 crashed 4 km SE of Nijkerk (Gelderland). Hauptmann Paul Zorner, Gruppenkommandeur of Stab.III/NJG5 at Mainz-Finthin, was credited with a Mosquito, which he saw flying on one engine at 0300 hours NW of Sint Trond for his 42nd victory (his only Mosquito Abschuss in a total of 59 Nachtjagd victories).

36 Ypsilon, Y-Verfahren, Ypsilonverfahren: Luftwaffe ground-controlled navigation by means of VHF.

37 MZ578 crashed near Gulpen in Limburg Province 16 km ESE of Maastricht. Wingham and Lewis evaded capture and after 4½ months returned home to RAF service. The official German communiqué stated Somerscales, Poole and 1 u/i airman KIA. Stephen, Reavill and Rowe were PoWs.

38 On 19/20 November 1943 Leutnant Fries had scored his fourth Abschuss when he shot down Stirling III LJ442 JN-F on 75 Squadron RNZAF near Horrues, 35 kilometres south-west of Brussels, which Flight Sergeant N. N. Parker RAAF had taken off from Mepal, north of Cambridge at 1701. Four crew members were found dead at the crash site: Sergeant Michael Irvine Ryder Day, rear gunner, whose name was found on an envelope, Sergeant Stanley 'Tuffy' Watkins, flight engineer, who was identified by his clothing card and two others (later identified as Pilot Officer

William Robert 'Bill' Kell RNZAF, WOp and Sergeant William 'Jack' Gilfillan, mid-upper gunner. The crew's bomb-aimer, Sergeant Jack Hyde RNZAF - an Australian by birth - had bailed out only moments before the aircraft exploded in mid-air. He landed heavily, fracturing his pelvis and spitting out two teeth and losing one of his eyelids. He was taken to the Luftwaffe hospital in Brussels-Sint Gilles. Flight Sergeant Parker the experienced Australian captain and his navigator, Sergeant Robert E. Griffith evaded capture after bailing out of their crashing aircraft and reached England early the following year. Four crew were killed and one was taken prisoner. Parker received a commission, subsequently volunteered for the Path Finder Force and survived another fifty operations, acting on some as Master Bomber.

39 See *The Last Flight of Lancaster LL919W* researched by Anne Grimshaw (1994) and *'Aircrew Remembered'*.

40 *Perilous Moon, Occupied France, 1944 – The End Game* (Nimmo, Casemate 2012).

41 Adapted from eyewitness reports published in *The 4T9er, November 2014, Issue 35.* Colin Cripps provided information on the three aircraft.

42 The 4T9er, May 2015. The other members of the crew who died are: Sergeant Richard Beetham Hainsworth, the 19-year old flight engineer; Flight Sergeant Frederick William Wale, the 19-year old navigator; WO2 Norman Alexander Freeman MacKenzie RCAF the 23-year old air bomber and Sergeant Claude William Frank Sizer, the 20-year old Wireless operator.

43 Sergeant R. Eames, flight engineer; Flying Officer W. V. Ransom RCAF; Flight Sergeant W. S. J. McKee RCAF; Flying Officer W. H. Russell; Sergeant R. J. Hayes and Flight Sergeant M. D. MacKinnon RCAF were taken prisoner. Watson lies in Choloy War Cemetery.

44 In 1946 and 1947, five members of the crew put forward recommendations for the Victoria Cross to be awarded to Flight Lieutenant James Watson but he was awarded a posthumous Mention in Dispatches only.

45 During the whole of April 215 victories were claimed by Nachtjagd crews.

46 Johnen was appointed Staffelkapitän of 8./NJG6 in May 1944 and based in Hungary. In two months, he added eleven victories, including four Soviet-flown B-25 Mitchell bombers. Oberleutnant Johnen was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross in July for 33 victories and was awarded the Ritterkreuz in October 1944. That autumn he was appointed Gruppenkommandeur of III./NJG6, serving until the end of the war. On 15/16 March 1945 Johnen claimed his 34th and final kill in over 200 sorties; a Lancaster 15 kilometres south east of Würzburg. All his victories were recorded at night. Included in his victory total are 24 Viermots.

47 Jabs survived the war with 50 victories in a total of 710 sorties. Wing Commander Page DSO DFC* who had suffered severe burns in the Battle of Britain, scored ten victories and five shared destroyed, three damaged.

48 Leslie, the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Harry Lissette, of Pakowhai, Hastings, New Zealand, joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1939 before the outbreak of war as a member of the ground crew but at his own request he was transferred to air crew, and undertook training in his own time becoming a pilot. In October 1942 he left New Zealand for further training at Calgary, Canada. He then went to England and was posted as a pilot to a Lancaster bomber squadron, where he took part in operational raids over Germany and occupied France.

Lancaster III ND556 went down at Chaintreaux in Seine-et-Marne, 12 km SE of Nemours. Sergeant Ron Ellis, rear gunner, a boy apprentice engine fitter before the war, married to Kathleen and they had a daughter, also Kathleen, was KIA. Nick Stockford, flight engineer from Chipping Norton, evaded capture but died of pleurisy one week after he returned to the UK. An engine fitter at a training school in South Africa he had re-mustered when a call went out for flight engineers. Ron Emeny, mid upper gunner from London, also evaded capture but was badly burnt. He was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. Laurie Wesley, bomb aimer from West Bromwich, spent time as a PoW in Buchenwald. Jack Pittwood, navigator from Warley, evaded capture as did Phil King, radio operator from Lozells in Birmingham.

49 *Lancaster Down!: The Extraordinary Tale of Seven Young Bomber Aircrew at War* by Steve Darlow (Grub Street 2000).

50 *RAF Evaders* by Oliver Clutton-Brock (Grub Street 2009). On the night of 27/28 May Oberleutnant Greiner claimed two enemy aircraft shot down for his 30th and 31st Abschüsse. In spring 1944 Greiner had flown day sorties intercepting 8th Air Force Viermots. He claimed victories on 30 January and 10 February and two on 6 March. From March Greiner had led

11./NJG11. He was awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold on 29 March. He recorded his 20th victory on the night of 22/23 April and he was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 27 July 1944 for 36 victories.

51 *Lancaster Down!: The Extraordinary Tale of Seven Young Bomber Aircrew at War* by Steve Darlow (Grub Street 2000).

52 See *Lancaster Down!: The Extraordinary Tale of Seven Young Bomber Aircrew at War* by Steve Darlow (Grub Street 2000). Darlow and two of his crew were taken into captivity; the rear gunner was killed and three others evaded capture.

53 Martstaller was killed in a crash on St. Trond aerodrome in August 1944.

Chapter 5
Menacing The Reich

The Mosquitoes lived up to their name. They were the night-fighters' greatest plague and wreaked havoc among the German crews. The radar equipment of this wooden aircraft surpassed anything that had previously been seen. It was technically so perfect that at a distance of five miles they could pick the German night-fighters out of the bomber stream like currants out of a cake.

***Duel Under The Stars* by Wilhelm Johnen**

Flying Officer Vivian Bridges DFC and his bespectacled radio operator, Flight Sergeant Donald G. 'Spider' Webb DFM on 239 Squadron boarded their Mosquito NF.II at West Raynham, their remote airfield in Norfolk for another night of intruding over the Reich. The fact that Webb wore spectacles was not unusual. When the AI.Mk.IV came out the RAF thought that anybody could read the two tubes but when they sent up radar mechanics they found that there was somewhat more to being a navigator/radio operator. It was insufficient just to know where the target was when flying straight and level. When the aircraft was banked so the horizontal base from the one tube became the vertical base and vice versa. Radar operators also had to be able to read at what angle the aircraft was approaching the target and whether it was head on or whatever. The result was that the RAF started recruiting people deemed to be highly intelligent and they also seemed to waive certain medical and age requirements.

Bridges and Webb had yet to score their first victory when they boarded their Mosquito on the night of 10/11 May 1944. They strapped in, the ladder was removed, collapsed and handed to Webb who snapped it in its place on the door after it had been closed and latched. The external starting batteries were plugged in, the engines primed and they were ready to start. The odd few minutes before starting dragged like hours and then, eight minutes before take-off, Bridges yelled 'Contact starboard' and he started the Merlin engines. With both engines going and the radio heating up they felt much better and their anxiety faded away. The ground crew unscrewed the undercarriage locks and removed the starting batteries and waved the Mossie crew out to the perimeter track where Bridges followed the blue lights around to the take-off position. Bridges did a quick run-up and cockpit check and then flashed the downward recognition light to signal that they were ready to go. A green light flashed from the control tower and Bridges lined up and took off. All signals before an 'Op' were visual only, so that the enemy could not tell by radio chatter when they departed. It was pretty black outside now and Bridges and

Webb did not feel too comfortable until they had 1,000 feet under them.

As they climbed away and turned to set course over the airfield Bridges flashed his call-sign letter as they passed over. Bridges climbed to 4,000 feet, ready to dive and weave his way across the enemy coast just ahead. Their true airspeed worked out to be 262 mph but with the tail wind, their groundspeed was nearer 311 mph. The Mosquito crew could hear the enemy scanning them for almost as soon as they climbed it sounded 'insect like' in their earphones and it imparted a nervousness all of its own. Diving and gently weaving they flew safely across and levelled off between 1,500 and 2,000 feet. The scanning had stopped now and Webb set course for the next turning point. Over Belgium at 0010 hours near Ellezelles not far from Courtrai Webb picked up a blip on his scope. He reported a contact at four miles range. Bridges obtained a visual at about 1,200 feet range. He closed in and identified the target with binoculars as a Bf 110. It was Bf 110 3G+E1 of 1./NJG4 flown by Oberleutnant Heinrich Schulenburg with his bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel Hermann Meyer who had just destroyed their first '4-mot' south of Evereux airfield. Meyer had replaced Leutnant Norbert Pietrek after he and Schulenburg had been injured on 1 October 1943 when he crashed at Bieul northwest of Dinant during a ferry flight after suffering engine trouble. Bridges gave the Messerschmitt a short burst which set one engine on fire and the aircraft spiralled down to crash at Ellezelles. Schulenburg and Meyer, who was wounded on the skull and badly concussed, bailed out near Flobeq. Meyer spent three weeks in hospital at Brussels and then had four weeks leave at home. In 1945 Schulenburg took command of 13./JG3.

When 239 Squadron dispatched 'Serrate' patrols to Belgium in support of the bombers raiding Hasselt and Louvain again on 12/13 May Viv Bridges DFC and 'Spider' Webb DFM sought their second victory. They were not disappointed for they destroyed a Ju 88G-6 of 5./NJG3, which crashed at Hoogcruts near Maastricht. Unteroffizier Josef Polzer (a replacement pilot who had yet to open his score) and Obergefreiter Hans Klünder, radar operator were killed and Gefreiter Hans Becker, bordschütze was wounded. Flying Officers 'Bill' 'Bright Eyes' Breithaupt RCAF and 'Jimmy' Kennedy DFM on 239 Squadron also downed a Bf 110 in the Hasselt-Louvain area. Breithaupt, born 7 August 1920 and educated in Kitchener and Toronto and at University Schools was attending University of Toronto on enlistment (Mechanical Engineering). A keen sportsman, he liked skiing, hockey, tennis and swimming and his hobbies were reading and photography.

At the end of the month Viv Bridges and 'Spider' Webb gained their third victory in Mosquito NF.II DZ297 when they shot down a Bf 110 near Trappes on the night of 31 May/1 June. May had been an eventful month in many ways. On 11/12 May 429 bombers of the Main Force had made attacks on Bourg-Leopold, Hasselt and Louvain in Belgium. The target for 190 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes was a former Belgian Gendarmerie barracks at Leopoldsburg (Flemish)/Bourg-Leopold (French), which was being used to accommodate 10,000 SS Panzer troops who awaited the Allied invasion forces. The weather was bad with low cloud and poor visibility and a serious error was made with the broadcast winds. As a result, the aircraft were late over the

target area and consequently flare-dropping was scattered and provided no adequate illumination. An 'Oboe' Mosquito flown by Flight Lieutenants John Burt and Ronald Curtis on 109 Squadron dropped a yellow marker. The Mosquito marking force of 627 Squadron arrived late over the target with the result that the 'Oboe' proximity marker was seen by only one of the marking aircraft and the proximity marker, unfortunately, seemed to burn out very quickly. Flare dropping was scattered and did not provide adequate illumination of the target. Haze and up to 3/10ths cloud conditions hampered the marking of the target. The 'Marking Leader' then asked the 'Master Bomber' (Squadron Leader Mitchell on 83 Squadron), if he could drop 'Red Spot Fires' as a guide for the flare force. The Master Bomber agreed and 'RSFs' went down at 0024 hours in the estimated vicinity of the target. Unfortunately, the 'Main Force' started to bomb this red spot fire immediately it went down and half of the main force bombed this. The result of this was the five Mosquitoes on 627 Squadron returned to Oakington with their bombs and were unable to mark the target. Immediately Mitchell ordered 'Stop Bombing', as he realized it was impossible to identify the target but VHF was very poor, particularly on Channel 'B' and the Germans had jammed Channel 'A'. Only half the main force received the 'Cease Bombing' instruction and 94 Lancasters bombed the target. At 0034 hours a wireless message, 'Return to base' was sent out to all crews.

One of the aircraft that failed to return on 11/12 May was a Lancaster on 166 Squadron flown by Pilot Officer Geoffrey John Reader Clark, which was probably shot down by Oberleutnant Gottfried Hanneck of 6./NJG1 for his first victory. Hanneck had entered the Luftwaffe in July 1939 and trained as a fighter pilot during the next year. Expecting a posting to an operational unit, he was selected to serve as an instructor instead. Throughout 1942 he served in a liaison unit on the Eastern Front but he became so bored that he volunteered for night-fighter pilot training. Posted to 6./NJG1 in April 1944, he started flying at Deelen near Arnhem on 1 May. Geoffrey Clark and three crewmembers were killed when their aircraft crashed at the hamlet of Elkerzee northeast of Haamstede. Three others on the crew survived to be taken into captivity.

After Nachtjagd's successes during the Mailly-le-Camp raid, just a few 'Tame Boar' operations were mounted by First Jagdkorps during the remainder of May. On the nights of 11/12 May and 12/13 May 52 and 65 night-fighter crews respectively scored twelve and thirteen victories. George Vantilt, a fifteen-year-old Beverlo boy, recalls: 'The raid of 12 May had brought the terror of war again to the doorstep of the people of Beverlo. Eighty-four people were killed and many more were wounded. One lady died one year after the raid. She lost her whole family and could not get over her grief. Low flying aircraft woke us up that night. We had no air raid shelter. Together with my parents and sister we ran to the neighbours who a shelter in the garden. Once inside, the first bombs were falling very close. We were thinking they bombed the coalmine at Beringen. We all prayed. The constant change of air pressure hurt our ears. It was hell on earth! The family escaped unhurt and our house too was lucky. As we came out of the shelter, fires were all around. Most of the

people had small farms and even today when I smell burnt hay I think of that terrible night in May. The day after the raid we all went to the village. The Zuidstraat road was totally destroyed. Dead cows in the fields spread a terrible smell. The people were shocked and in one house a complete family were killed. Everybody in the village lost a relative or friend that night. The next Sunday after the raid we went to church as usual. After the service, my friend and I went to the crash site of a Lancaster, which had exploded in mid-air during the raid. The place where one of the crewmembers had died could still be seen as a print in the cornfield. Parts of the aircraft were scattered over one kilometre.'

The crashed aircraft George Vantilt saw was most probably Lancaster I LL792 on 467 Squadron RAAF, flown by Pilot Officer John Francis Ward with Wing Commander John Raeburn Balmer OBE DFC RAAF and crew, which was making its final bomb run when it was attacked by Oberleutnant Fritz Lau of 4./NJG1. LL792 exploded with a full bomb load, killing all eight on board. The aircraft came down two kilometres west of Beverlo. Five Lancasters were lost on the raid.

Flight Lieutenant Harry White DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Mike Allen DFC* in Mosquito NF.II DZ726/Z on 141 Squadron reached double figures by bringing down a Ju 88 a few miles north of Amiens. Flying another 141 Squadron Mosquito NF.II (DZ240/H) over the country of his birth this night was 44-year-old bespectacled Belgian pilot Flight Lieutenant Lucien Joseph Ghisl LeBoutte and his radar operator Flying Officer Ron S. Mallett. LeBoutte had flown over fifty 'Instep', 'Ranger',[54] night fighter and 'Serrate' patrols and had damaged three trains in strafing attacks but the cherished air to air victory he sought had eluded him. Now his luck was about to change. Mitchell and Marauder bombers had been reported approaching from the Calais-Brussels area and a Ju 88G-1 of 6./NJG2 crewed by Feldwebel Wilhelm Simonsohn, pilot and Unteroffiziers' Günther Gottwick, his funker and Franz Holzer flight engineer, which had taken off from Köln-Wahn, a satellite field to the main base at Köln-Butzweilerhof, was one of those sent to intercept them. Like LeBoutte Simonsohn was still chasing his first aerial victory of the war. As with so many relatively inexperienced Nachtjagd crews, only occasionally did they get into a position to fire their guns in anger. One Abschuss, which was claimed in April in the Cologne area was not credited to the crew but was instead given to one of the flak batteries defending the city. During another sortie that same month the crew tracked a Lancaster in the vicinity of Hannover. Having positioned his aircraft underneath the huge bomber Simonsohn pressed the gun button of his 2cm 'Schräge Musik' but a shell jammed in the barrel of his starboard cannon and he was unable to fire a single shot and the Lancaster had escaped unscathed.

Simonsohn had taken off at around 2200 on 11 May towards Brussels and flew in the direction of the Channel coast. They had been in the air about 1½ hours, when a burst of tracer from port and below struck the Ju 88G's port engine and set the tank on fire. Simonsohn pushed the airtcraft down to force the Mosquito to break off the attack but his eyes, used to the dark, were blinded by the flames. Simonsohn shouted into the throat mike, 'Bail Out!' Franz

Holzer knelt on the floor hatch to operate the lever on the hinge side and disappeared with the hatch cover. Günther Gottwick, sitting back to back with his pilot, tipped stiffly sideways towards the hatch and also disappeared into the night. Simonsohn meanwhile, had released his harness, taken off his helmet and bailed out. He landed 'like a wet sack' in the vegetable patch of a farm. The following morning all three crew were together again, 'slightly ruffled but happy and taken to Brussels.'

The Ju 88G-1 had crashed between Mechelen and Leuven northeast of Brussels. This was LeBoutte's only kill during his time on 141 Squadron. On 24 May Lucien LeBoutte and Mallett were awarded DFCs. In June LeBoutte was officially 'tour expired'. (Mallet was on his third tour).[55] At the end of June Simonsohn had to belly-land his Ju 88G-1 at Kassel-Rothwesten after a starboard engine failure caused by machine gun fire from a bomber gunner. Simonsohn and his crew suffered several broken bones in the crash. Having recovered from his injuries in hospital he was posted to 4./NJG100 in Hungary in November, where he flew a handful of night interdiction ground attack sorties. He completed 28 operational sorties before the end of the war.

On the night of 14/15 May nine German aircraft were claimed shot down by Mosquitoes, four of them over England. The night of 15/16 May was a grand Mosquito affair also. Thirty Mosquitoes went to Ludwigshafen and smaller numbers visited as far afield as Carpiquet airfield near Caen and Leverkusen while 43 Lancasters mined the waters from the Kiel Canal to Biscay. Three Lancaster minelayers went missing but the Mosquitoes returned without loss. Two 'Serrate' patrols were despatched and one of them, Pilot Officers 'Andy' Miller and 'Freddie' Bone on 169 Squadron returned with claims for a hat trick of victories. They destroyed two Ju 88s, one of them on the German-Danish coast and the other in the Kiel Canal area and a Bf 110 to take their score to five enemy aircraft destroyed in 100 Group and eight all told. Then there was a lull though Berlin received another visit by Mosquitoes of 8 Group on the 16/17th.

Only 195 Heinkel 219 Uhu's were delivered to operational units of the Nachtjagd between mid-1943 and late 1944. Mainly, they were issued to 1./NKG1 at Venlo, Holland. It was a formidable aircraft but was no real match for the Mosquito night intruder and losses increased when Mosquitoes were sent in numbers to mingle with the bomber streams bound for the Reich. One such night was on 19/20 May when RAF Bomber Command flew a little over 800 sorties to eight targets in France. Another 88 sorties were flown on RCM, 'Serrate', 'Intruder' and minelaying operations off the French coast. Seven Lancasters were lost on the raids. One of them was a victim of flak while the raid on Le Mans claimed three Lancasters, including the aircraft flown by the Master Bomber and his deputy, which collided over the target. Nachtjagd's only claim this night was by Oberleutnant Jakob Schaus of 4./NJG4 for a Viermot near Vimoutiers. Mosquito night fighters flew eight 'Serrate' and 23 'Intruder' sorties over France and the Low Countries and they returned with one claim though the Luftwaffe lost two Bf 110s to long-range night fighters, one at Venlo (4./NJG1), Holland and one near Chartres (1./NJG6), France.

That night Wing Commander Norman John 'Jack' Starr DFC and Pilot

Officer J. Irvine on 605 Squadron in a FB.VI were aloft in their Mosquito 'Intruder'. Starr had taken command of the squadron on 11 April after a successful career on 23 Squadron in the Mediterranean where he had destroyed two Ju 88s and damaged two other aircraft. On 6/7 May he had scored his first victory for the 'County of Warwick' Squadron by destroying a Bf 110 at Ste-Dizier airfield for this third kill overall. Starr and Irvine took off from Manston at 0100 hours for their patrol over France on 19/20 May and they headed for the vicinity of Florennes where landing lights were obligingly switched on, as a twin-engined aircraft prepared to land. Starr and Irvine whose Mosquito was at 2,000 feet, were assisted further when a searchlight on the northwest side of the airfield was switched on and began sweeping the area before it was switched off, the operators presumably satisfied that there no intruders following the landing aircraft. Starr dived to attack while his prey, oblivious to the Mosquito's presence, blinked its landing light on and off sufficiently for Starr to estimate his position on the runway. Just as he was about to open fire the German aircraft switched on its landing light again and appeared to be travelling at about 20 mph. Starr gave the aircraft a 1½ second burst of cannon only and strikes were seen in front of the machine and then strikes all over the aircraft. (Starr and Irvine were unable to identify their victim). By this time the Mosquito was very close to the ground in the dive and Starr had to pull out very sharply. As he pulled out Starr and Irvine saw the German machine catch fire and all the airfield lights were switched off. They orbited the airfield and saw a motor vehicle with powerful headlights on dash up to the now blazing aircraft, which the fire crew took about twelve minutes to extinguish the flames.[56]

Leutnant Otto Fries, II./NJG1's technical officer at Arnhem/Deelen and his bordfunker Feldwebel Alfred Staffa, meanwhile, were aloft in He 219V16-0 G9+DC on a test flight when the port engine burst into flames and they were finally obliged to eject. Ernest Heinkel had awarded 1000 Reichmarks each to the first crew to use the new system, which went to Unteroffizier Herter and Gefreiter Werner Perbix whose He 219 was shot down by a Squadron Leader Neil Reeves DSO DFC and Pilot Officer A. A. O'Leary DFC** DFM on 239 Squadron 'near Aachen' on the night of 11/12 April 1944. (The RAF night fighter crew claimed a 'Dornier Do 217'). Fries and Staffa were admitted to the hospital at s'Hertogenbosch in southern Holland, their aircraft having crashed three kilometres south of this town. Fries suffered a head wound and concussion. Staffa, having landed head first into a field at high speed, sustained extensive contusions and a heavy concussion. Only in July 1944 were the crew declared fit to fly on ops again and they were posted to I./NJG1 at Venlo. By war's end they were one of sixty crews that used the 'Katapultsitzen' or the ejection seat. In the period 12 June 1943-2 July 1944 twenty 'Uhu' pilots destroyed 111 Bomber Command aircraft, including seven Mosquitoes. The top-scoring He 219 pilot during this period was Hauptmann Ernst-Wilhelm Modrow, Staffelkapitän 1./NJG1 with twenty-five kills, followed by Hauptmann Heinz Strüning, Staffelkapitän 3./NJG1 with fourteen and Oberleutnant Josef Nabrich (3./NJG1) with eleven Abschüsse. Nabrich was born at Schiessnig on 22 January 1921. By January 1945 He 219 production

ceased in favour of the Ju 88G ('Gustav') series. Between 12-13 August 1944 and 13-14 April 1945, a total of eleven 'Uhu's were claimed destroyed by Mosquitoes of 100 Group (with eight He 219s shot down), the 2nd TAF and the ADGB (with claims for three 'Owls').

Heinz Strüning was a recipient of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub). Strüning shot down 56 aircraft in 280 sorties. All of his victories were recorded at night. Born on 13 January 1912 in Bergisch-Gladbach Strüning joined the Luftwaffe in 1935. He was posted as an Unteroffizier to 5./ZG26 'Horst Wessel' on 2 August 1939 and he flew several ground attack sorties during the campaign in Poland. His Staffel was then transferred to serve with Kampfgeschwader 30 supporting German troops defending the bridgehead of Narvik in Norway. Strüning was then transferred to the Nachtjagd, arriving in July 1940 to 1./NJG2. With this unit, Feldwebel Strüning made 66 intruder flights over England at night and gained his first victory on the night of 23 November. In November 1941 he was transferred to 7./NJG2. At the end of 1941 he had nine claims in total. By mid-September 1942 'Uncle Heini' as he was known to his fellow fighter pilots, had gained fifteen victories and he was promoted to Leutnant. He received the German Cross in Gold in July 1942 after his 19th claim and was awarded the Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes in October. From November Strüning served with NJG2 in the Mediterranean from bases in Sicily, until April 1943. Strüning was then transferred to 2./NJG1 in May. On 1 June he shot down three Lancasters. Promoted to Oberleutnant and appointed Staffelkapitän of 3./NJG1, Strüning coordinated the introduction of the new Heinkel He 219 'Uhu'. With this aircraft, Strüning downed three bombers on the night of 1 August 1943. By April 1944 Strüning had fifteen night victories and on 20 July he was awarded the Eichenlaub. Shortly after he was appointed to take command of 9./NJG1.

Bomber Command directed its might against German targets once again on 21/22 May when 532 aircraft raided Duisburg. Twenty-nine Lancasters were lost, 'Tame Boar' crews claiming 26 bombers shot down, most of them over the southern provinces of the Netherlands.[57] Duisburg was covered by cloud but the 'Oboe' sky-marking was accurate and much damage was caused in the southern areas of the city. Twenty-nine Lancasters were lost on the operation and three more were lost on mine laying operations off enemy coasts. Among the victory claimants were Hauptmann Martin Drewes who shot down a Lancaster, which crashed into the sea, for his fortieth Abschuss and Oberleutnant Fritz Lau of 4./NJG1 who destroyed a Lancaster west-north-west of Rotterdam for his seventh victory. Lau recalled. 'I saw one of the crew bail-out over the sea and I believed it to be my absolute duty to worry about his fate so I notified the rescue service immediately after I landed. I gave the rescue services the position and time of the shoot-down so that they could get the search and rescue operation under way as quickly as possible.[58]

Dortmund was severely hit by 361 Lancasters and fourteen Mosquitoes the next night, Monday 22nd/Tuesday 23rd May for the loss of eighteen Lancasters while a second stream of 225 Lancasters and ten Mosquitoes headed for Brunswick. There, thirteen Lancasters failed to return. This time the

Nachtjagd claimed 38 kills (a slight over-claiming to actual Bomber Command losses). Flight Lieutenant Dennis Lawrence Hughes and Flying Officer R. H. 'Dickie' Perks on 239 Squadron destroyed a Bf 110. Wing Commander Neil Ballingal Reid Bromley OBE DFC and Flight Lieutenant Philip Vincent Truscott on 169 Squadron destroyed Bf 110G-4 05+2 of 3./NJG3 which crashed at Hoogeveen, south of Groningen. The pilot, Feldwebel Franz Mullebner, Flugzeug-führer and Unteroffizier Alfons Josten, bordfunker and Gefreiter Karl Rademacher, bordschütze, all bailed out successfully.

With invasion of France imminent, Bomber Command's main objectives on 24/25 May for 264 Lancasters, 162 Halifaxes and sixteen Mosquito bombers were the Westbahnh rail station in Aachen and the Rothe Erde marshalling yard east of the town. Three Mosquito NF.II crews on 239 Squadron were successful when 100 Group dispatched six RCM aircraft and 31 'Serrate' and eight 'Intruder' Mosquitoes on Bomber Support. Flying Officer 'Bright Eyes' Breithaupt RCAF and Flying Officer 'Jimmy' Kennedy DFM added a Ju 88 to their score when they claimed the night-fighter fifteen miles ESE of Bonn. They also damaged a Bf 109 northwest of Aachen. Two Bf 110s of 7./NJG shot down at Aachen were possibly destroyed by Flight Lieutenant Denis Raby DFC and Flight Sergeant 'Jimmy' Flint DFM and Dennis Hughes and 'Dickie' Perks. Bf 110G-4 2Z+HR flown by Unteroffizier Oskar Volkel, crashed at the Wesertalsperre near Eupen, south of Aachen. Volkel and Unteroffiziers' Karl Hautzenberger, bordfunker and Günther Boehxne, bordschütze, bailed out safely. Bf 110G-4 2Z+AR crashed at 0230 hours in a forest between Zweifall and Mulartshuette, southeast of Aachen. Oberleutnant Helmuth Schulte, Staffelkapitän of 7./NJG6 and Unteroffizier Hans Fischer his bordschütze both bailed out safely. Unteroffizier Georg Sandvoss, bordfunker was killed. On 30 November 1944 Schulte's Ju 88G-6 2Z+CC was shot down in aerial combat with a Mosquito flown by Squadron Leader F. S. 'Gon' Gonsalves and Flight Lieutenant Basil Duckett on 85 Squadron over Altenkirchen. Schulte's crew were bordfunker Leutnant Hans-Joachim Böhme, bordfunker Oberfeldwebel Herbert Meyer and bordschütze Oberfeldwebel Friedrich Fischer. On 2/3 February 1945 Schulte was flying Ju 88G 2Z+AC when he was wounded by bomber return fire over Heilbronn. Böhme and Unteroffizier Friedrich Fischer bailed out uninjured.

Fortress II BU-A SR384/A, one of the three RCM Fortresses used for jamming duties on 214 Squadron at Oulton[59] provided support for 44 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes attacking the Ford Motor factory at Antwerp. This Fortress, with its crew of nine was being flown by 27-year old Pilot Officer Allan James Neville 'Skipper' Hockley RAAF was destined not to return. Oberleutnant Hermann Leube, Staffelkapitän 4./NJG3 flying Ju 88G-1 D5+KM had taken off from Plantlünne, a satellite airfield between Rheine and Lingen/Emsland at 2303 hours on 24 May. Feldwebel Eberhard Scheve served as bordfunker in the crew and Stabsfeldwebel Druschke was the bordschütze. Leube went off in pursuit of the bomber stream, as Scheve recalls: 'Until this day our night fighting radar SN-2 was jammed only by Düppel ('Window'). On this night however a flying transmitter, which caused a flickering of the waves over the full width of the picture tube and which completely prevented

the blips from appearing normally jammed our equipment. I tried a few tricks, switched off the transmitter of my SN-2 set, then dimmed the amplifier on the receiver and then had two different flickering bands to the left and to the right of the middle line. I told my pilot to alter his course and established that the flickering bands changed accordingly. I therefore decided that I could use this jamming transmitter as a flying beacon to home on to. As the jamming transmitter probably flew inside a bomber stream to give protection to the formation, we decided to investigate this. It took us a long time before we spotted the bomber and we attacked it no less than six times before we were able to shoot it down.' Leube first set the fuselage of SR384 on fire and then the wings and finally the Fortress exploded over the Oosterschekelde near Antwerp at 0057 hours. Hockley and his 20-year old mid-upper-gunner, Sergeant Raymond George Victor Simpson were killed. This was the first Fortress crew on 214 Squadron that was lost on operations since it became part of 100 Group in January 1944. 'At once when the bomber exploded' continues Scheve 'the jamming of the SN-2 ended. Our Staffel comrades, who had also flown around aimlessly for several hours, confirmed the vanishing of the jamming at this instant.'

The victorious Ju 88G-1 crew returned safely to base at 0220 hours. 'At debriefing', continues Scheve, 'we told of our observations but we were then told that no such thing existed as a jamming transmitter for the SN-2 and that we had experienced jamming by the overlapping of other SN-2 sets.' Flight Sergeants Thomas Duke 'Tommy' Glenn, navigator and Robert Yewen 'Bob' Gundy RNZAF, bomb aimer, Sergeants' Walther William Charles 'Bill' Hallett the flight engineer, Robert Francis 'Bob' Lloyd-Davies, wireless operator, Enoch 'Nick' Lovatt, rear gunner, James Edward 'Jim' McCutchan RCAF, waist gunner and Flight Sergeant Raoul Trichon 'Tom' Lyall, wireless operator, were taken into captivity. Hermann Leube was killed in action on 27/28 December 1944. He had 22 Abschüsse.

Flying Officer Desmond Trevor Tull and his radar operator, Pilot Officer Peter James Cowgill on 219 Squadron flying Mosquito NF.XVII HK345 claimed a Ju 88 55 miles east of Orfordness for their first victory but the Intelligence Officer would only award them a 'probable'. Tull would score eight victories in total in 1944. On 3/4 June he claimed an unidentified twin-engined aircraft off the Dutch Frisian Islands. The Intelligence Officer listened to Tull and Cowgill's description of the aircraft and after studying his identification manuals he concluded, correctly as it turned out, that the twin-engined aircraft must have been a He 219, although this was not confirmed until after the war. Their victim was He 219A-0 G9+BL of 3./NJG1, which was on a night target-simulation. After about 1½ hours' flight time the aircraft was attacked from the rear. Hauptmann Heinz Eicke received no warning from the JLO or his bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel Heinz Gall. The left engine immediately burst into flames and could not be extinguished. Eicke was able to eject to safety near the River Scheldt and was not hurt. Gall was found dead with his parachute not deployed about 500 metres from the crash site 400 metres north of Wilhelminsdorp. Tull and Cowgill claimed a Me 410 on 7/8 June and three Ju 88s and a Bf 110 in July to September (when the crew joined the Fighter

Interception Unit) before claiming a Ju 88G and a He 111 in October. In November Tull was awarded the DFC. He and Cowgill were killed on the night of 18/19 December when they accidentally rammed a Bf 110 landing at Düsseldorf.

No aircraft were lost on the raids on Eindhoven (where bad weather prevented bombing), the French coast or Antwerp but 25 Lancasters and Halifaxes failed to return from the attacks on Aachen-West (which was well hit) and the Rothe Erde yards (which escaped serious damage). Nachtjäger claimed 32 kills. Before the bomber stream reached Aachen the 'Night Ghost of Sint Trond', Oberleutnant Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer, Gruppen-kommandeur Stab IV/NJG1 claimed five Viermots destroyed in fourteen minutes, 0115-0129 hours, for victories 70 to 74. The first four of these were Halifaxes. He shot down LK885 on 51 Squadron three kilometres northwest of Eindhoven and it crashed at Acht with the loss of Pilot Officer Wilfred Carroll Lawson RCAF and two of his crew. LW653 on 158 Squadron piloted by Flight Sergeant John Seymour MacLeod Clarke followed three minutes later two kilometres NNW of Tilburg. There were no survivors. At 0122 the third Halifax, (MZ622) on 76 Squadron, went down west of Goirle, SSW of Tilburg. There were no survivors on the crew of 23-year old Flight Sergeant Peter Stuart Wade RAAF. Three minutes later LW124 on 429 'Bison' Squadron was destroyed between Dongen and Tilburg. Warrant Officer2 Mario Alfred Fernandez de Leon RCAF (who was from Guatemala) and three of his crew were killed. Finally, at 0129 Schnaufer shot down a Lancaster seven kilometres southwest of Tilburg. He 219 'Uhu' aircraft of I./NJG1 at Venlo destroyed another seven of the Aachen raiders. II. and III./NJG6 were guided to the Aachen force via radio beacon 'Ida'. Despite strong 'Intruder' activity and jamming of the SN-2 radar these claimed five Lancasters and Halifaxes destroyed plus one 'probable' Viermot for the loss of three Bf 110G-4s.

After a night of minor operations on 26/27th May when two Mosquitoes were lost to German night fighters on the raid on Ludwigshafen, the night following the men of Bomber Command steeled themselves for a Main Force attack on Bourg-Leopold again. This time 331 Halifaxes, Lancasters and Mosquitoes returned to try to finish the job that had ended in disaster a few nights earlier. Mosquito night fighter crews provided the usual Bomber Support for the Main Force raids on Aachen and Bourg-Leopold. Flight Lieutenant Harry White DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Mike Allen DFC* were one of seven Mosquito crews on 141 Squadron. At 0235 hours a little to the west of Aachen, Allen obtained two Al contacts at 14,000 feet and 12,000 feet, crossing right to left. At a range of 8,000 feet the two blips merged into one and Allen remarked to White: A bomber's about to be shot down in front of us at any minute. 'Still crossing.' White wrote: 'We turned to port in behind this contact and at 1,200 feet, obtained a visual on two white exhausts. We had not increased speed as range was closing quite rapidly but as we assumed the line astern position. The exhausts faded from sight and range was increased to 8,000 feet before, at full throttle, we were once more able to decrease the range slowly to 1,200 feet again, obtaining a visual on two white exhausts. We closed to 600 feet where I was able to identify this target as a Me 109. I closed further

to 300 feet and opened fire with a two-second burst from 15° below. It exploded with a colossal flash, which completely blinded me for about a minute and a half. I asked Mike to read my instruments for me but his attention was at that moment elsewhere. The flash had attracted his attention from his box and he looked out in time to see a second Me 109 slip slowly by under the starboard wing. With his head now well in the box, Mike commenced reading off the range as this 109 emerged from minimum range behind. But even the best navigator cannot carry out an interception with the help of a blind pilot and the range had increased to 6,000 feet astern before I could even see my instruments. We turned hard port but contact went out of range at 14,000 feet.' Although the second Bf 109 had escaped, the eleventh victory of Harry White and Mike Allen was duly recorded in 141 Squadron's record book.

239 Squadron provided eight Mosquitoes on Bomber Support. One was flown by Flying Officers R. K. Bailey and J. F. M. White who shot down a Bf 110G-4 (140042) of 7./NJG1 piloted by Unteroffizier Joachim Tank who was injured in the crash one kilometre west of Spannum before the Mosquito men also crashed, near Renswonda (Utrecht). Bailey and White were taken prisoner.[60] The only Mosquito claim of the night, off Den Helder, was by Feldwebel Rauer of 3./NJG1 who had claimed two Mosquitoes destroyed on 24 May; the only occasion that a night-fighter pilot had claimed two 'Wooden Wonders' in a single night. Bailey recalled: 'Intelligence had declared Leeuwarden to be the main reaction base of the German night-fighter force for operations that night. We were detailed to arrive at Leeuwarden when the German fighters would be reacting to the radar indication of the approach of the main force of bombers (we crossed the North Sea at sea level to avoid detection). The plan of operations worked for no sooner had we reached the Leeuwarden area than the navigator called 'Serrate contact'.

We followed this target in a climbing orbit to 11,000 feet where in conditions of high haze and resultant poor visibility I sighted a Me 110 directly ahead and at very close range. Two bursts from the four 20mm cannon resulted in an explosion and showers of debris into which we flew. The navigator called out another 'Serrate' contact, which I had to ignore being engaged in feathering the propeller of the starboard engine, which had overheated and stopped. Assessing the situation the navigator said he would give a course for our base in Norfolk. I asked him instead for a course to Calais and thence to Manston, Kent to avoid a North Sea crossing in a damaged aircraft, the extent of which was unknown. Ten minutes later the port engine failed and I ordered bail out. Within seconds the navigator was gone and I made to follow diving head first across the cockpit to the escape hatch. I had trimmed the rudder for asymmetric flying when the starboard engine failed but I omitted to neutralize trim when the port engine failed. The result was a steep spiral dive. Meanwhile I was trapped, having caught the top section of the hatch. I was head and shoulders out in the slipstream with my legs and torso in the aircraft. I was almost reconciled to this situation when a stupid thought crossed my mind that when the aircraft struck the ground 1 would be sheared in two! This possibility brought about a frenzied new effort. Suddenly I was free from the whistling slipstream and falling in space. I pulled the ripcord and the

parachute opened; I said a prayer of thanks. Some seconds later I made contact heavily with the ground.'[61]

Squadron Leader Neil Reeves DSO DFC 'A' Flight CO on 239 Squadron and Pilot Officer A. A. O'Leary DFC** DFM destroyed Bf 110F G9+CR of 7./NJG1, which crashed at Spannum in Friesland province in Holland at 0115 hours. Unteroffizier Joachim Tank, 26 was slightly wounded. Unteroffiziers' Günther Schroder the 19-year old bordfunker and Heinz Elwers the 24-year old bordschütze were killed.

Nachtjäger claimed 29 Viermots. Among the claimants was Hauptmann Hans-Karl Kamp of Stab III./NJG4 who recorded three Lancaster Abschüsse to take his score to twenty kills. Oberleutnant Hans-Heinz Augenstein claimed three Halifax victories to take his score to forty victories. Feldwebel Robert Schratter of 9./NJG5 who had two Abschüsse shot down two Lancasters and a Halifax; two of them northwest of beacon 'Goldammer'. Leutnant Otto Keller of the same unit claimed a Lancaster and a '4-mot' for his 8-9th victories. Hauptmann Ernst-Wilhelm Modrow claimed two Lancasters at Bisbar in the space of ten minutes.

Nine Halifaxes and one Lancaster were lost on the Bourg-Leopold raid. Seven thousand German soldiers were killed or missing and 218 German women, who arrived on 26 May to receive nursing training, were also killed. Civilian casualties were 22 killed. All the buildings 'including the big messes' had been destroyed. The 'Cavalry Camp', which held many Belgian political prisoners, survived the attack. The guards had closed the doors and ran away leaving the prisoners locked up unattended. Twelve Lancasters failed to return from the raid on Aachen and one was lost on the raid on Rennes.

On 31 May/1 June in another operation in support of the forthcoming invasion, 219 aircraft - 125 Lancasters, 86 Halifaxes and eight Mosquitoes - attacked the railway marshalling yards at Trappes, Paris in two waves. For Flight Sergeant Louis Patrick Wooldridge DFC, mid upper gunner on Halifax III MZ617 LK-D on 578 Squadron, it was to be his crew's last operation before a seven-day period of leave:

'The purpose of the operation, carried out in brilliant moonlight, was to disrupt German troop movements and war materials from eastern France, central Germany and the occupied countries. As we approached the target area, flying high above the almost 10/10ths low lying cumulus cloud I observed a Ju 88 night-fighter about 7,000 feet below, streaking away at an angle of about 45 degrees in the direction of our starboard quarter. It was soon several miles away and posed no danger to us but the target area was apparently full of night fighters. The Master Bomber called for assistance but the anguished reply from the Deputy Master Bomber was, 'I bloody can't. I've been hit', whether by one of the numerous bursts of heavy flak in the target area at that time or enemy fighter activity. Several aircraft [four Lancasters all shot down by NJG4 and NJG5 FTR] including some squadron commanders, were lost. On the whole enemy fighter activity was considered intense in the target area. Presumed to be a relatively easy target, Trappes apparently lived up to its name and had become an operational aircraft trap.'

The presence of fourteen Bomber Support RCM aircraft and sixteen

'Serrate' and nine 'Intruder' Mosquitoes may have had something to do with the low loss rate. One Mosquito 'Intruder', a Stirling minelayer and two Halifaxes and a Hudson, which were on Resistance operations, were the only aircraft that failed to return. Feldwebel Wilhelm 'Willi' Morlock of 3./NJG1 claimed the Hudson two kilometres southeast of Tholen Island and a Halifax in the sea off Walcheren. A second Halifax was claimed by Oberleutnant Hans Krause thirty kilometres south of Subotica. Hauptmann Fritz Söthe of 4/NJG4 flying a Bf 110G-4 claimed two Viermots. Söthe, who was wounded in action on 12 June, was killed flying a Ju 88G-1 on 28/29 September during aerial combat with a Mosquito. He had eighteen victories. 239 Squadron at West Raynham dispatched ten Mosquito NF.II night fighters on 'Serrate' sorties and two of these crews returned with claims for two Bf 110s destroyed. Flying Officer Viv Bridges and Flight Sergeant 'Spider' Webb claimed a Bf 110. Flight Lieutenant Denis Welfare DFC* and his Welsh navigator Flying Officer David B. 'Taffy' Bellis DFC* in Mosquito NF.II DZ256/'U shot down a Bf 110 west of Paris. It was the latter's first victory since they had flown their first op together on 19 March, when they had patrolled Holland and France with no contacts. Similarly they had had no luck with further patrols during the following weeks:

'Success came at last', Bellis recalled, 'on the night of 31 May when we picked up a 'Serrate' transmission north of Paris. Our first priority was to make certain that the transmission did not come from a fighter homing on us from behind! We then manoeuvred our Mossie to get behind the transmitting aircraft. To our dismay, it switched off its radar before we were in AI range. However, we kept on the same course and picked up an AI contact a minute or so later and converted this to a visual and the shooting down of a Me 110.'

On 2/3 June Oberleutnant Jacob Schaus of 4./NJG4claimed three Viermots, one at Mantes-Rambouillet and two in the Dreux area. He would follow this with a double victory on 7/8 June southwest of Paris and four more that same month, including another double victory on 28/29 June in the Grand Quevilly/Pont Audemer areas. On 4/5 June Flying Officers 'Bright Eyes' Breithaupt RCAF DFC and 'Jimmy' Kennedy DFC put in a victory claim for a Ju 88G-1 approximately ten miles south of Alderney at about 0016 hours, height 15,500 feet. Fire was opened at 100 yards range, the enemy aircraft's port engine exploded and the whole aircraft caught fire and dived steeply into the sea. Unteroffiziers' 'Willi' Hammerschmitt, an inexperienced replacement pilot and Friedrich Becker, bordfunker and Feldwebel Johannes Kuhrt, bordschütze of 5./NJG3 were killed when their aircraft crashed twenty kilometres North of Spiekeroog. On the night of 5/6 June the 'D-Day' invasion, postponed by 24 hours because of bad weather, finally began with thousands of ships and aircraft setting out for five beach landing areas on the Normandy coast. Most everyone had known for several weeks that the invasion was imminent but only the Chiefs of Staff knew when and where. Luftwaffe activity was almost non-existent. Fewer than fifty plots were made. Twenty-one 'Serrate' Mosquitoes were despatched to northern France but only two victories were claimed by 100 Group crews and both were on 239 Squadron. Flight Lieutenant Denis Welfare DFC* and Flying Officer 'Taffy' Bellis DFC* claimed a Bf 110 North

of Aachen. It is remotely possible that it was G9+NS of 8./NJG1, which crashed at 0054 hours on the North beach of Schiermonnikoog, which was claimed by Flight Lieutenant R. L. R. Davis on 25 Squadron. Unteroffizier Adolf Heinrich Stürmer, 22-year old replacement pilot (no victories credited); Unteroffizier Ludwig Serwein (21) bordfunker and Gefreiter Otto Morath (23) bordschütze were killed.

The AI.Mk.X radar[62] equipped NF.XVIIs on 85 Squadron and 157 Squadron's NF.XIXs at Swannington officially began operations on 5/6 June, when sixteen sorties were flown. Twelve Mosquitoes on 85 Squadron operated over the Normandy beachhead, while four on 157 Squadron patrolled night-fighter airfields at Deelen, Soesterberg, Eindhoven and Gilze Rijen in Holland. 85 Squadron despatched twelve Mosquitoes over the Normandy invasion beaches and four Mosquitoes on 157 (and ten of 515 Squadron) made 'Intruder' raids on Belgian and Dutch airfields and strafed road, rail and canal traffic. Two 515 Squadron FB.VIs failed to return. Squadron Leader John Leslie Shaw and his navigator, Sergeant Philip Standley-Smith were shot down by Hauptmann Heinz Strüning, Staffelkapitän of 3./NJG1 flying a He 219 'Uhu', for his 49th confirmed kill. Squadron Leader William Ronald Butterfield DFC MiD and his navigator Sergeant Cornelius Stanley Drew were lost without trace off Dieppe heading for the Lille area.[63] The Luftwaffe had put up just 59 fighters to intercept the invasion forces but only two Nachtjäger submitted one claim each.[64] Finally, Oberleutnant Helmut Eberspacher, a fighter-bomber pilot of 3./SKG10 flying a FW 190G-3 claimed three Lancasters at Isigny and Carentan while Feldwebel Eisele of the same unit claimed another Lancaster at Isigny-Lessay-Vire. On 5 June Leutnant Ernst Mauss and Unteroffizier Günther Kraus, took off in a Heinkel He 219A-0 at 2301 hours on a night target simulation. Due to weather closing in they were recalled to Grove. While overflying the field in the penetration-procedure in a southerly direction the left engine lost RPM and after power could not be restored was shut down. The engine burst into flames explosively. Mauss ordered the bale-out and the canopy was jettisoned by the bordfunker. At this instant crew communication broke and after twice calling Kraus, Mauss ejected successfully. The bordfunker's remains were found in the crashed aircraft near the Herning-Silkeborg road, eight kilometres East of Herning and four kilometres South of Ikast.

On 6/7 June 1,065 RAF four engine bombers and Mosquitoes dropped 3,488 tons of bombs on rail and road centres on the lines of communication behind the Normandy battle area for the loss of ten Lancasters and a Halifax. Nachtjäger claimed twelve Viermots, including five 'Lankis' by Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker in the area around Caen. Raids on the communication targets continued on 7/8 June when 337 aircraft were dispatched to bomb railway targets near Paris at Achères, Juvisy, Chevreusse and Versailles-Matelet and an important road and rail junction at Massy-Palaiseau about fourteen miles south of Paris. Crews bombed from 6,000 feet and at this height they encountered intense light flak. On the leg into the target they also met considerable fighter opposition and 28 Lancasters and Halifaxes were lost on the raids on the road and rail targets. Two more Lancasters were lost on a raid on the Fôret de Cerisy. In total, Nachtjäger crews claimed 37 Viermots. Among

the claimants were Oberleutnant Franz Brinkhaus with four and Major Walter Borchers with three Abschüsse. At 0138 21-year old Leutnant Joachim Plass of 1./NJG5 claimed a Lancaster (LM522 on 57 Squadron), which crashed near Ste-Nicholas d'Alliermont with the loss of the entire crew including the 29-year old skipper, Pilot Officer Stanley Findley. This Lancaster was the first of his five Abschüsse. Plass was killed in a crash on 14/15 February 1945 at Berlin after an engine fire.

On 8/9 June Nachtjäger and 100 Group Mosquito night-fighter claims were to the fore and three Lancasters and a Mosquito bomber went missing in action. In the Paris area Wing Commander Neil Bromley OBE and Flight Lieutenant Philip Truscott on 169 Squadron shot down a Dornier - possibly Do 217K-3 6N+OR of Stab III./KG100. Oberleutnant Oskar Schmidtke and Unteroffiziers' Karl Schneider, observer; Helmuth Klinski, bordfunker and Werner Konzett, bordmechaniker were killed. Mosquito night-fighter crews on 141 Squadron meanwhile had mixed fortune. Flying Officer A. C. Gallacher DFC and Warrant Officer G. McLean DFC destroyed an unidentified German aircraft over Northern France after they had chased it into a flak barrage at Rennes where it was brought down by a single burst. Capitaine Henri Joseph Bunderoet D'Hautecourt and Ltn Charles Emil Kocher, a popular Free French crew who had been with the Squadron since February returned from their seventh operation on one engine and landed at Ford, Sussex but the NF.II swung off the runway and crashed into two fighter aircraft. Both Frenchmen later died of their injuries.

On the night of Saturday 10/Sunday 11 June when 432 aircraft attacked rail targets in France fifteen Lancasters and three Halifaxes were lost. Nachtjagd claimed 21 Lancasters and Halifaxes. Hauptmann Paul Zorner Gruppen-kommandeur III./NJG5, the former Ju 52 transport pilot who had joined the Luftwaffe in October 1938 and had transferred to night fighting in October 1941 was credited with three Halifaxes and a Lancaster in the Dreux area to take his score to 52. Leutnant Walter Briegleb of 10./NJG3 was credited with four Lancasters; three in the greater Paris area, his fourth victim crashing 25 kilometres east-southeast of Rouen at 0132 hours to take his score to eight confirmed victories. Two Mosquitoes also failed to return from a raid by 32 of the 'Wooden Wonders' on Berlin.

One of the German night-fighter crews on patrol this night was Oberleutnant Josef Nabrich and his bordfunker, Unteroffizier Fritz Habicht of 3./NJG1 who were flying a cleaned up He 219 'Uhu' with the armour plating and four of the cannons removed especially for hunting Mosquitoes. Nabrich was looking to add to his claims for four bombers destroyed during May, including two in one night (on 24 May). This crew began their patrol high above the Zuider Zee until ground controllers reported the approach of a formation of Mosquitoes at a slightly lower altitude. Habicht looked at his SN-2 radar display and directed Nabrich to reverse course for about 10½ kilometres towards a Mosquito flying east at high speed. Over Osnabrück the He 219 crew obtained visual contact and Nabrich closed to within firing range. He opened up with a short burst from the wing cannon. The starboard engine of the Mosquito (B.IV DZ608 on 692 Squadron) immediately burst into flames

and started down in a spiral, out of control. Before Nabrich could attack again the Mosquito's bomb load exploded and the blast caused the 'Uhu' to stall. Nabrich finally managed to recover just above the cloud layer. Only pieces of the Mosquito were found but Flying Officer I. S. H. MacDonald RAAF and Flying Officer E. B. Chatfield DFC had bailed out immediately after the first attack, convinced that a new anti aircraft weapon and not a night-fighter had shot them down. Both men survived and were taken prisoner.

This same night another Mosquito, BX.VI MM125 on 571 Squadron flown by Flight Lieutenant Joe Downey DFM, was shot down returning from Berlin by Hauptmann Ernst-Wilhelm Modrow of 1./NJG1 flying a He 219 'Uhu' for his 19th victory. Downey's navigator, Pilot Officer Ronald Arthur 'Wimpy' Wellington, recalls:

'The attack on our aircraft consisted of a short burst of cannon fire, no more than five rounds. The starboard engine was hit and burst into flames. The aircraft immediately went into an uncontrolled dive and on receiving the order 'Bail Out' I made my exit from the normal escape hatch. At the time Joe was preparing to follow me. Very shortly after pulling the ripcord I saw the aircraft explode beneath me. It is therefore very unlikely that Joe was alive when the remains of the aircraft crashed onto the dunes near Bergen, a small seaside town three miles northwest of Alkmaar.'

Airborne again on the night of Sunday 11/Monday 12 June Oberleutnant Josef Nabrich and his bordfunker, Feldwebel Fritz Habicht of 3./NJG1 in their He 219 'Uhu' sought more victories as the LNSF sent 33 Mosquitoes to Berlin again as the heavies bombed rail targets in northern France. West of Salzwedel at 0113 Habicht was able to pick up a Mosquito, so near that he could see it clearly without radar. Nabrich had difficulty getting into a firing position because the Mosquito pilot, 26-year old Flight Lieutenant Charles Anthony Armstrong DFM MiD RNZAF on 139 Squadron, was carrying out wild evasive action. Finally, he gave the B.IV two bursts of 20mm cannon and DZ609 went down vertically, exploding seconds' later below the cloud cover killing Armstrong and his 27-year old navigator, Flying Officer George Leonard Woolven. Now it was time for Nabrich to have concern. He had made his pursuit at full power and seconds after the Mosquito went down the port DB603 engine of his He 219 seized. He feathered the propeller and was able to make a single-engine landing at Perleberg. Generalleutnant Josef 'Beppo' Schmid sent Nabrich and Habicht a congratulatory telegram and a gift of several bottles.

Nabrich, Staffelkapitän of 3./NJG1 was killed in his vehicle during a strafing attack by RAF fighter-bombers on Reichstrasse 54 from Handorf to Telgte on 27 November 1944. He was posthumously awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold on 1 January 1945. Feldwebel Fritz Habicht was wounded on 3/4 February 1945 when he and his pilot, Hauptmann Alexander Graf (Count) Rességuier de Miremont bailed out of He 219A-2 G9+CH. Over the Ruhr they were pursuing a Lancaster (possibly Lancaster I PD221 BQ-R on 550 Squadron) coned by four searchlights but as they went to attack two of the searchlights suddenly moved and illuminated the 'Uhu'. The Lancaster gunners set the He 219A-2 on fire while the night-fighter crew's fire caused the Lancaster to go

down near Roermond. (PD221 crashed near Westerbeek, Noord Brabant, nine kilometres southwest of Boxmeer. Flying Officer Robert George Nye and crew were killed). Habicht jettisoned his canopy and his pilot ejected. Habicht's ejection seat handle had been shot off in the attack but he nevertheless managed to get free of the aircraft and immediately pull the ripcord of his parachute. He had been hit in the shoulder and chest in the attack and he suffered worse injuries when he hit some tall trees but Habicht survived although his operational flying was over. He had been involved in seventeen victories.

The Nachtjagd did not have it all its own way. Wing Commander Charles M. Miller DFC** CO of 85 Squadron and Flying Officer Robert Symon in a Mosquito NF.XIX fitted with AI.Mk.X shot down a Bf 110 over Melun airfield at 0035 hours. Denis Welfare and Taffy Bellis on 239 Squadron on patrol between Paris and Luxembourg, on radar watch for night-fighters picked up a German airborne radar transmission about ten miles away on their 'Serrate' apparatus and homed on to it. They made a contact 10,000 feet away with their own AI and in a few minutes converted it to a visual, showing clearly the twin fins and faint exhausts of a Me 110 which Welfare quickly despatched from about fifty yards and the 110 immediately blew up. Their Mosquito flew into debris and was enveloped in burning petrol but fortunately the fire did not get hold, though the fighter was damaged. The crew jettisoned the escape hatch ready to bail out but Welfare was able to control the aircraft and flew 300 miles home in a plane without an escape hatch.

Raids on flying bomb sites and communication targets in France and synthetic oil targets in Germany were high on the Bomber Command target list. On 12/13 June 671 aircraft attacked communication targets, mostly railways in France and a stream of 286 Lancasters and 17 Mosquitoes headed for Gelsenkirchen. Near Rheims Flight Lieutenant James Gilles 'Ben' Benson DFC and Flight Lieutenant Lewis 'Brandy' Brandon DFC on 157 Squadron in NF.XIX MM630/E chased a contact during a low-level patrol of three airfields (Laon-Athies, Laon-Couvron and Juvincourt). Finally, Brandon could see the blip on his AI.Mk.X coming in to 800 feet. It was a Junkers 188. At 150 yards' range Benson fired a three-second burst at the Junkers. There were strikes on the starboard wing roots and the starboard engine caught fire. A further two-second burst blew pieces off the port wing tip. A short third burst produced strikes on the burning starboard engine. Then the whole of the port wing outboard of the engine broke off and passed under us. A second later the Junkers hurtled straight down in flames and exploded on the ground in the Fôret Compiegne. It had taken the crew just under four minutes from obtaining contact on this aircraft to seeing it hit the ground. From the light of the burning starboard engine they had seen a swastika on the tail and dark green camouflage on the upper surface of the wing. It took Benson's personal tally to five.[65]

Seventeen Halifaxes and six Lancasters failed to return from the communication raids and seventeen Lancasters were brought down on the Gelsenkirchen raid by the German defences. At 0145 hours Hauptmann Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich, Staffelkapitän, I./NJG6 and Hauptmann Joachim

Böhner of Stab I./NJG6 at Deelen both claimed a Lancaster - probably LM158 on 90 Squadron, which was being flown by Flying Officer Albert Clark Elliott RCAF and which crashed two kilometres west of Laag Soeren. Elliott and and five crew were killed. One man survived to be taken prisoner. Hauptmann Friedrich, who had claimed a Lancaster shot down near Seeburg as his tenth victory on the night 25/26 February was appointed Gruppenkommandeur of I./NJG6 on 12 July. He had eighteen victories at this time. On the night of 11/12 September Friedrich claimed a Lancaster shot down near Darmstadt to record his twentieth victory.

Oberleutnant Fritz Lau, Unteroffizier Gustav Sarzio and Leutnant Gottfried Hanneck[66] of II./NJG1 also operating from Deelen, each claimed a Viermot destroyed. Their victims were Lancasters, respectively LL812 on 622 Squadron, which exploded over Oirschot and crashed near Eindhoven with the loss of Pilot Officer William Frederick Henry Rattle RAAF and crew; LM465 on 15 Squadron piloted by American Pilot Officer Carleton Stewart Thompson RCAF with only one of his crew surviving, northwest of Venlo and DV286 on 300 Squadron which crashed into the Ijsselmeer off Wijdenes at 0143 hours. All except one member of 30-year old Flight Sergeant Franciszek Rembecki's crew were killed. Oberleutnant Dieter Schmidt, Staffelkapitän, 8./NJG1 and his crew, Schonfeld and Schlosser, who were on their 126th combat sortie, in Bf 110 G9+AS (Anton Siegfried), claimed one of the Gelsenkirchen raiders, Lancaster LL678 on 514 Squadron flown by 20-year old Pilot Officer Herbert Samuel Delacour RAAF, son of John Herbert and Mary Elizabeth Delacour of Charters Towers, Queensland. On 9 August Schmidt received confirmation of the crash of a Lancaster near Warminghaven, thirty kilometres east of Arnhem. Further confirmation by the Reich Air Ministry followed in February 1945. Three of Dealacour's crew evaded. The rest of the crew were killed.[67]

On Wednesday 14th/Thursday 15th June 100 Group and 2nd TAF wreaked havoc on the continent. Two victories went to 85 Squadron Mosquito NF.XIXs. Flight Lieutenant Hugh Brian Thomas and Pilot Officer Charles Blackley Hamilton brought down a Ju 88 near Juvincourt. Flying Officer Branse A. Burbridge DFC and Flight Lieutenant 'Bill' Skelton DFC on Mosquito NF.XIX/Y claimed a Ju 188 destroyed southwest of Nivelles for their fifth victory.[68] Bransome Arthur 'Branse' Burbridge was born on 4 February 1921 into a family with strong Christian and pacifist beliefs. He was not an ambitious man. After leaving school he worked as an officer clerk for an insurance company. On 3 September 1939 Burbridge registered himself as a conscientious objector but by 1940 he came to the conclusion the British cause was just and enlisted in the RAF. A competent pilot and a quick learner he completed his training within a year and was posted to 85 Squadron, a night fighter unit which was equipped with the American-designed Douglas A-20 Havoc before re-equipping with Bristol Beaufighters. His time on the Havoc brought only one probable claim against enemy aircraft with a further damaged in 1942. Burbridge was then posted to an operational training unit (OTU) as an instructor before spending a year as a staff officer attached to various squadrons. In August 1943 he teamed up with Francis 'Bill' Seymour Skelton and they began flying together regularly throughout the winter of 1943-44.

Right: Friedrich Lang; Hauptmann Erich 'Bubi' Hartmann; Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer (who received the Oak Leaves with Swords), Horst Kaubisch Skrizpek and Adolf Glunz (who received the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross) at an awards ceremony with Adolf Hitler.

Right: Major Helmut 'Bubi' 'Boy' Lent and Feldwebel Walter Kubisch his 25-year old funker of Stab NJG3. Above, Left: Prinz Egmont zur Lippe-Weissenfeld. Below, left: Major Alexander Ludwig Peter Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein. Right: Oberleutnant Dietrich 'Dieter' Schmidt.

`Left: 'Hajo' Hermann.

Right: Oblt Karl Löffelmann of 9/NJG3 and Stab III/NJG3 who was credited with one night Abschuss before he was killed flying a Bf 110G-4 on 30/31 January 1944 when he was attacked by a Mosquito flown by S/L 'Joe' Cooper and F/L Ralph Connelly on 169 Squadron.

Below: Lancaster III ED547 PO-M on 467 Squadron RAAF at Bottesford in October 1943 with F/L Leo Braham Patkin RAAF (front row, first on right, KIA 1/2 January 1944) and his crew (Sgt G. A. Litchfield, bomb aimer (KIA 1/2 January 1944) on Patkin's right and Sgt Ralph Chambers, flight engineer, MIA 1/2 January 1944, second from left back row) who were shot down by Major Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, Kommodore NJG2 for his 71st Abschuss on 1/2 January 1944. The rest of the crew consisted of Sgt Cliff T. Cooper, MUG (grounded with a head-cold on 1/2 January, later posted to 582 Squadron PFF, finishing the war with 56 ops); F/O W. N. 'Bill' Fisher RAAF, rear gunner (WIA 3/4 November 1943 in night-fighter attack over the Ruhr and taken off ops)' F/O R. J. A. Maidstone, navigator (KIA 1/2 January 1944) and F/Sgt W. D. 'Blackie' Blackwell RAAF (KIA 1/2 January 1944). ED547 and P/O B. A. Tait RAAF and his crew FTR from the raid on Berlin on 29/30 December 1943. It crashed at Grossziehten near Berlin killing all seven crew. (Jim George)

Right: 24-year old Eichenlaubträger Hauptmann Manfred Meurer, Kommandeur I/NJG1 and his Funker, Ritterkreuzträger Oberfeldwebel Gerhard Scheibe.

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Left: Unteroffizier Heinz Vinke and his crew of 5./NJG2 at Leeuwarden in 1942.

Right: Oberfeldwebel Paul Mahle (27), an armourer attached to II./NJG5 at Parchim, who designed the prototype of 'Schräge Musik', which was soon fitted to all of the Gruppe's aircraft.

Above: P/O Harold Callaway Wills RAAF and crew on 466 Squadron RAAF at Leconfield on their return from Frankfurt on 20/21 December 1943. Left to right: F/O Donald Neil Rankin from Melbourne (later awarded DFC); Sgt F. Cunliffe from St. Helens, Lancashire (evaded, 15/16 March 1944); P/O R. A. Fitch from London; P/O Harold Callaway Wills RAAF from Ashfield, NSW (later held as PoW); Sgt R. W. Jackson from Winchester (PoW 15/16 March 1944); Sgt John Francis Wood RAAF from Randwick, NSW (PoW 15/16 March 1944); and Sgt H. W. Clark from West Molesey, Surrey (PoW 15/16 March 1944). Wills, Jackson, Fitch, Cunliffe, Wood and Clark and F/Sgt H. E. Dawson RAAF, bomb aimer, were shot down on the night of 15/16 March 1944 on Stuttgart by Hauptmann Heinz Reschke of III/NJG6 and all were taken prisoner.

Right: Oberleutnant Paul Anton Guido Zorner of 8./NJG3. He survived the crash of his Bf 110G-4 on 25 July 1944 after an engine fire and he emerged unscathed after being shot down during combat on 17 April. He rapidly increased his score and finished the war with 59 Abschüsse.

Left: 1st Lieutenant 'Lou' Luma, pilot of Mosquito FB.VI Sweet *Moonbeam McSwine* and Flying Officer Colin 'Fin' Finlayson on 41 Squadron RCAF. Luma flew his fina RCAF sortie on the night of 30 April 1944 and then transferred to the 8th Air Force. Finlayson was killed on 18 October 1944 when he and his pilot, 24-year old F/L Stanley Herbert Ross Cotterill DFC RCAF were returning to England from Italy after landing there at th end of a 'Day Ranger' to the Vienna area.

Left: Major Günther Radusch of Stab/NJG2.

Right: Leutnant Eckart-Wilhelm 'Hugo' von Bonin of 6./NJG1.

Right: Oblt Heinz Rökker, Staffelkapitän, 1./NJG2.

Below, left: Oblt Helmuth Schulte of 4./NJG5.

Below, right: Ofw Karl-Heinz Scherfling, who had 33 to 35 night victories when he was KIA on 20/21 July 1944.

Top Left: F/L Allan Francis McKinnon DFC RAAF on 460 Squadron RAAF, who skippered Lancaster I ME640 AR-N on 24/25 March 1944 on Berlin when he and five of his crew were killed.

Top Right: Flight Lieutenant John Harold Coller DFC, one of three air gunners on the eight-man cre on Halifax LV858 on 10 Squadron which was shot down by Hauptmann Kurt Fladrich of 9./NJG4 on the night of 10/11 April 1944.

Above: Wing Commander 'Bob' Braham DSO DFC** and Flying Officer W. J. 'Sticks' Gregory DFC.

Below: Line up of Bf 110s.

Above: Wreckage of Halifax II LV858 ZA-J on 10 Squadron.

Below, left: F/Sgt James 'Jim' Mudie, 467 Squadron RAAF and P/O Lindsay Samuel Fairclough, 463 Squadron RAAF. Fairclough, of Midlands, Western Australia was killed on Berlin on 30/31 January 1944 piloting Lancaster III ED545. F/Sgt Mudie, also of Midlands, WA, the flight engineer on F/L Leo Braham Patkin RAAF's crew was killed on Berlin on 1/2 January 1944. There were no survivors. (Australian War Memorial)

Below, right: Sgt (later W/O) Nicholas S. Alkemade, a 21-year-old tail gunner on 115 Squadron who bailed out of his doomed Lancaster at 18,000 feet and lived to tell the tale.

Top left: Feldwebel Günther Hauthal, bordfunker (left), Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann and Feldwebel Wilhelm 'Willi' Schopp, Bergmann's bordschütze of 8./NJG4. Top right: Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann.

Below Left: F/O Arthur Harold Probert RAAF (25) on 460 Squadron RAAF.

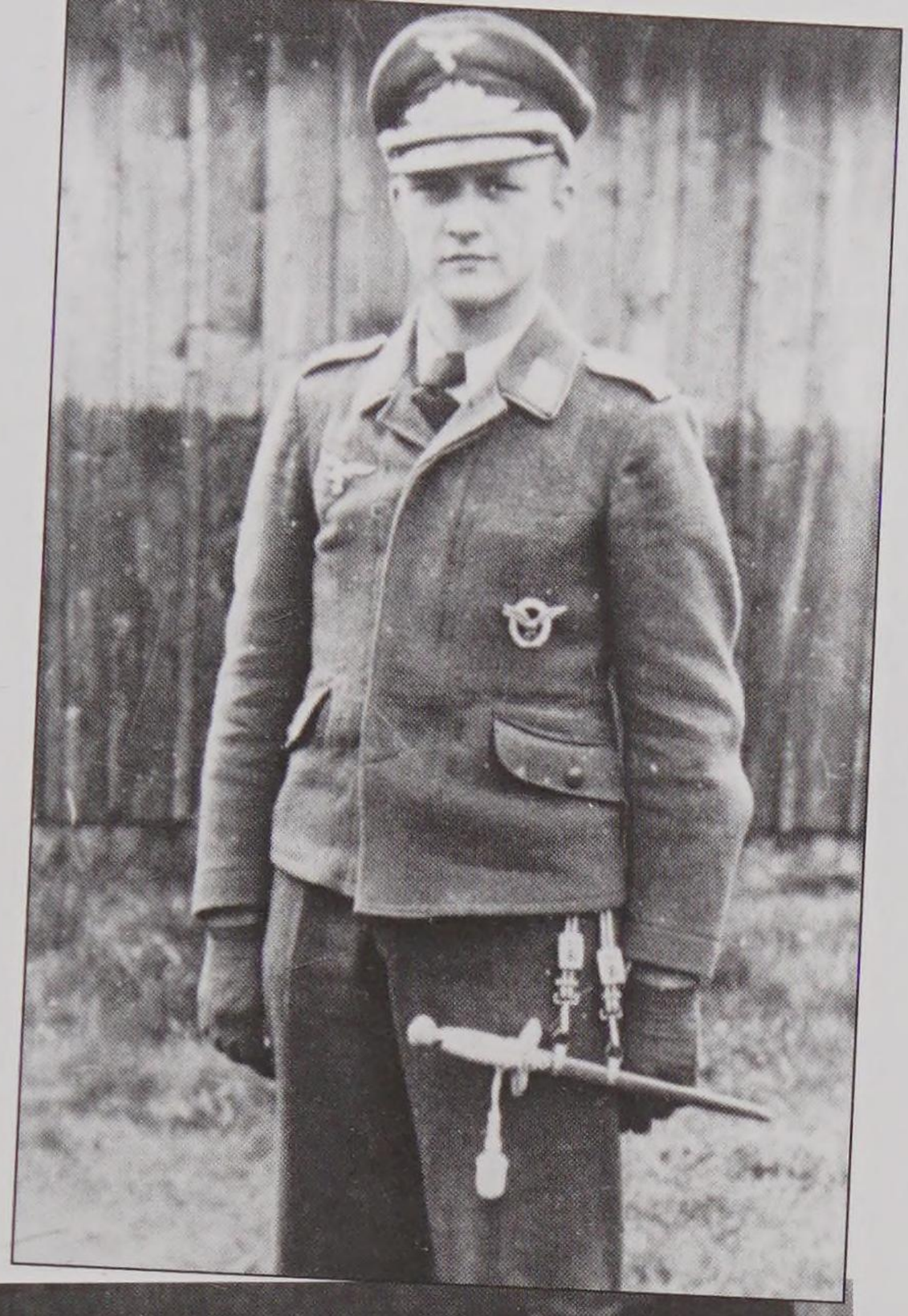
Below Right: P/O John 'Jock' Birnie (20) on 115 Squadron was killed in the Intruder attack at Witchford on 18/19 April 1944.

Below, left: Hauptmann Walter Bornschein, a former bomber ace of KG2 who was killed by return fire on 26 April 1944 flying a Ju 88. Bornschein had flown 225 combat sorties.

Below, Centre: F/L Charlie Eddy MBE (29) an Australian serving in the RNZAF on 115 Squadron who was killed in the Intruder attack at Witchford on 18/19 April 1944. It is probable that Oblt Claus Breissner of 5./KG51 shot down Eddy's Lancaster.

Below, right: Major Dietrich Puttfarken (23), Staffelkapitän of II Gruppe, Kampfgeschwader 51 'Edelweiss' a former bomber pilot, claimed two aircraft on 18/19 April 1944 flying a Me 410A-1 Hornisse. One of the Lancasters was 'Jock' Birnie's aircraft. Puttfarken was killed on the night on 22/23 April during another Intruder sortie over Eastern England.

Right: Leutnant Wolfgang Martstaller, pilot, I./NJG4. Martstaller was KIA in a crash at St. Trond aerodrome on 18 August 1944. (Cynrik de Decker via Roland Charlier).



Below: Lancaster ND587/D on 405 'Vancouver' Squadron RCAF flown by F/L William McLaurin Chase RAAF was shot down on 8/9 May 1944 by Leutnant Wolfgang Martstaller flying a Bf 110 and crashed twelve kilometres east of Tournai with the loss of all seven crew.

Above: Sgt John 'Jack' Ellenor (KIA 26/27 April 1944), the 33-year old gunner on P/O Cornish's crew on 49 Squadron.

Above, right: Flying Officer 'Bill' 'Bright Eyes' Breithaupt RCAF on 239 Squadron.

Right: Feldwebel Rudolf Frank of 3./NJG3.

Below: Bf 110G-4d/R3 night fighters of 7./NJG3 with FuG 220 Liechtenstein SN-2d AI radar, the antenna dipoles mounted at a 45° angle. SN-2d incorporated a tail-warning capacity. This type of radar equipment, which required a larger (grosse Hirschgeweih/'Big Antlers') antenna array than the 212C-1 Liechtenstein (Wide-Angle) was fitted to the Bf 110G-4 from September 1943 onward.

Above: On 3/4 May 1944 Lancaster III EE185 KM:A on 44 Squadron which was lost on Mailly-Le-Camp may have been shot down by Hauptmann Martin Drewes, III/NJG1. 29-year old P/O Allan William Nolan RAAF (KIA) and crew were killed. (Rob Davis MSc MIAP)

F/Sgt Leslie Harry 'Lizzie' Lissette RNZAF, the 26-year old pilot of Lancaster III ND556 on 207 Squadron, KIA on the Mailly-le-Camp raid on 3/4 May 1944 when his aircraft was attacked by a Focke Wulf 190. Lissette, who remained at the controls to the end so that his crew could bail out, was critically injured and he died later in a French hospital. (The Australian War Memorial)

Top: Leutnant Walter Briegleb of 10./NJG3.

Above, left: Oberleutnant Georg Hermann Greiner of IV./NJG1.

Right: F/Sgt Malcolm Henry Graydon RAAF (23) on 76 Squadron, a grocer prior to enlisting in the RAAF in August 1942, was, from 11 November 1943 a wireless operator at Lossiemouth, Morayshire, Scotland on a crew with F/Sgt Peter Stuart Wade RAAF, Sgt Kenneth Herbert Allaker, navigator, Sgt Stanley Patterson, bomb aimer, Sgt James Horrocks, air gunner and Sgt Roy Edwin Dennis Robinson, flight engineer. The crew were KIA on Aachen on 24/25 May 1944. Graydon's last diary entry, written on Sunday 14 May stated *'My engagement anniversary and Joan's, the dearest girl in the world'*. (Australian War Memorial)

Above: Fortress BII (B-17F) SR384 (or HB767, MIA 12/13 September 1944 in English Channel) BU-A on 214 Squadron at Oulton. On 24 May 1944 27-year old F/O Allan Hockley RAAF and his crew took off on a bomber support sortie on SR384 to Aachen. Near Antwerp they were intercepted by Ju 88G-1 D5+KM flown by Oblt Hermann Leube, Staffelkapitän 4./NJG3 who attacked no less than six times before SR384 finally exploded over the Oosterschelde at 0057 hours. Hockley and the mid-upper gunner were KIA. The other seven in the crew survived. Leube, his bordfunker Feldwebel Eberhard Scheve and bordmechaniker, Stabsfeldwebel Druschke landed back at Plantlünne, a airfield between Rheine and Lingen/Emsland. Leube, with 22 victories, died attempting to crash-land his Ju 88G-6 at Benthuizen near Gouda on 28 December 1944. (Gerhard Heilig via CONAM)

Below: Hockley's crew. Back Row: L-R: Sgt James Edward 'Jim' McCutchan RCAF, waist gunner (PoW 24 May 1944); F/Sgt Raoul Trichon 'Tom' Lyall WOp/AG (PoW 24 May 1944); W/O Raymond George Victor Simpson RAFVR the 20-year old mid-upper gunner (KIA 24 May 1944); F/Sgt Robert Yewen 'Bob' Gundy RNZAF, bomb aimer (PoW 24 May 1944); Sgt Enoch 'Nick' Lovatt, rear gunner (PoW 24 May 1944); Robert Francis 'Bob' Lloyd-Davies, Special Operator (PoW 24 May 1944); F/Sgt Thomas Duke 'Tommy' Glenn, navigator (PoW 24 May 1944); Pilot Officer Allan James Neville 'Skipper' Hockley RAAF (KIA 24 May 1944); Sgt Walther William Charles 'Bill' Hallett, flight engineer (PoW 24 May 1944). (Australian War Memorial)

Left : F/O Viv Bridges DFC and F/Sgt Don 'Spider' Webb DFM of 239 Squadron who on 10/11 May 1944 destroyed Bf 110 Werk Nr. 740179 3C+F1 of 1./NJG4 piloted by Oblt Heinrich Schulenburg near Ellezelles, Belgium. Two nights later they shot down Ju 88C-6 Werk Nr. 750922 of 5./NJG3 flown by Unteroffizier Josef Polzer at Hoogcruts near Maastricht. On 31 May/1 June Bridges and Webb scored their third kill (a Bf 110) followed on 7/8 July by another Bf 110 near Charleroi for their fourth and last victory of the war. (Don Webb Collection)

Below right: WO2 Douglas Reid Jennings DFC RCAF, air gunner on P/O 'Johnny' Cassan's crew. He and four other others bailed out but Cassan, Sgt Sydney H. Bryant RAFVR the 20-year old co-pilot, F/Sgt George Orr the 21-year old navigator of Glasgow and F/Sgt Alex Sharpe RAFVR the 23-year old mid-upper gunner, were killed. (Australian War Memorial)

Left: P/O 'Johnny' Cassan RAFVR, 21-year old pilot on Fortress SR382 on 214 Squadron who was KIA on 22 June 1944.

Below: The remains of Fortress SR382 BU-B on 214 Squadron.

Top left: Uffz Fritz Habicht of 3./NJG1.

Top, centre: Oblt Fritz Lau of 4./NJG1.

Top right: Leutnant Fritz Rumpelhardt, Schnaufer's bordfunker, who took part in 100 successful attacks.

Left: Leutnant Hans Schäfer of IV./NJG3. He was killed on 9 April 1945 in a crash landing at Lübeck airfield.

Below left: Leutnant Karl Kern of 2./NJG4 (Courtesy David Kibble-White).

Below: Hauptmann Hans Krause (right), Kommandeur of I./NJG4.

Right: General Josef 'Beppo' Schmid (front) chief of the 1st Fighter Korps with his chief of the General Staff, Colonel Heiner Wittmer.

Left: F/L William Wrixon Boylson DFC* RAAF of Balgowlah, NSW, a Mosquito pilot on 139 Squadron was killed on 24/25 June 1944 on Berlin. He and his navigator, S/L George Heath Wilson DSO DFC have no known grave. (Australian War Memorial)

Right and below: F/L Lucien Joseph Ghisl LeBoutte on141 Squadron.

Their first victory, a Me 410, came on 22/23 February 1944. Much of the night was spent in fruitless pursuit of contacts given from the ground. Eventually, in the early hours of the morning, Branse Burbridge was directed to make for an enemy aircraft which had been caught in the crossbeams of the glaring searchlights. Bill Skelton took over from ground control. Peering at his green screen, the 'blip' grew clearer. He had obtained a contact head-on to starboard and told Branse, who turned in that direction, immediately increased speed and dropped towards the enemy. Branse patiently stalked his prey until he could actually see it, identifying it at 600 feet range as one of the twin-engine destroyers - a Me 410. He drew in dead astern at 400 feet range and opened fire with a long burst. The cockpit was filled with the deafening thunder of cannon fire. Immediately, they saw the port engine of the enemy aircraft burst into flames. The flames spread to the fuselage and an explosion followed. As the plane began to disintegrate it rolled on its back and plummeted into the sea off Dungeness in flames. It was with mixed emotions that Burbridge and Skelton watched the enemy aircraft explode and Branse was relieved to see one parachute pass over the top of the Mosquito. The thought of casualties weighed heavily on his mind. In his original decision to serve in the RAF, he had been determined that his quarry should be aircraft not crews.

Two more victories followed in the Straits on 24/25 March. Once more they were flying on defensive duties waiting for the word from the ground below. The signs were ominous from take-off when the port engine of the Mosquito XVII was running exceedingly rough at high boost. Burbridge and Skelton drew close enough to see five enemy aircraft. All around them the dark skies were swarming with enemy aircraft even though they remained out of sight. Because of their engine trouble, the Mosquito was betraying its presence with a tell-tale stream of flame from the exhausts. In spite of this, when Branse received information about a contact, he flew off hot on the trail of an incoming enemy aircraft, which they identified as a Do 217. As they feared, the enemy aircraft realised they were on its tail and immediately started to take evasive action. Branse kept up pursuit, but the violence of his movements made the Mosquito's instruments topple so that they could no longer be sure of their own position. Even so, Branse continued to fire and could see his strikes in the tracer of his own bullets. He fired a final burst from a range of 600 feet. He hit the starboard engine of the Dornier which burst into flames as it dived sharply into cloud. Debris flew from the burning aircraft and struck the Mosquito. This was initially claimed as a 'probable' but was confirmed later by Intelligence.

Unsure of the extent of the damage and because the instruments had still not fully righted themselves, Branse decided to climb above the cloud. It was during this climb that he glimpsed the dull orange exhausts and silhouette of another enemy aircraft. Bill Skelton spotted it was as a Ju 88 which, too, started to weave away from them when it realised the chase was on. Branse let out a burst of fire, but did not see any strikes. He was determined to complete the attack however and as the Junkers vanished into cloud, he plunged after it. Frustratingly, he was called off by ground control at Sandwich because there was insufficient air space to press home his advantage. They were nearing the coast at Dover when they were put on the scent of enemy aircraft returning

from a bombing raid over England. Just ahead of them they could see the blue exhausts of a weaving enemy target which shot away from them. Branse 'was unable to get his sights on the Hun', although he was sure it was another Ju 88, so he could not fire before it vanished into a cloud. The Mosquito was now screaming in pursuit at 340 mph and Branse was able to straighten up and open up a burst of cannon fire. The way ahead was illuminated by the bright explosion and big blaze of the enemy aircraft as it spiralled into the sea. No more than forty minutes had passed since the action had begun![69]

On 18 April Burbridge and Skelton got a third victory. Returning from a fruitless chase, they were flying at 12,000 feet in the vicinity of Dungeness when Bill Skelton obtained a chance head-on contact on his screen. It was three miles away and somewhat above them. When they reached 3,000 feet range, he told Burbridge to pull sharply to starboard. The enemy aircraft was trying to shake the Mosquito off track by dropping Düppel but it did not work. Finally, they could see their prey 1,000 feet ahead. Burbridge closed to 300 feet and identified the target as a Ju 188. He drew dead astern and fired a 3-second burst. Immediately, a shower of sparks came from the port engine of the enemy aircraft as well as a spurt of oil which splashed on the windscreen of the Mosquito. They saw flames licking the port engine, wing root and fuselage. The Ju 188 dropped like a stone and exploded on hitting the sea south of Sandgate. Burbridge and Skelton remained circling the area and watched as the wreckage continued to burn for several minutes.

This victory was followed by Branse Burbridge's 'ace' status on 25 April. He and Bill Skelton had been alerted to the 'possibility of trade' by Wartling GCI and after a long wait were informed of the presence of an enemy aircraft about fifteen miles away which might 'necessitate rather a stern chase.' Although Skelton had obtained a contact he told Burbridge that the scanner on the AI was sticking in the upper position which meant that they needed to remain near the level of the enemy aircraft. By opening and closing the radiator flaps Branse managed to maintain speed while climbing until he picked out a dim silhouette in the distance. The sky was lightening with the fast approaching dawn and although Branse thought that he might manage to hit his quarry, he was all too aware that his own exhausts were equally visible. He needed to close in to ensure success and when they were 150 yards away from the Me 410, he blasted out a seven second burst of cannon fire. He knew he had scored a hit since there were two very bright flashes in the starboard engine of the enemy aircraft, which burst into flames and continued to burn steadily. Oil streamed back over the Mosquito windscreen which made it even more difficult to see through the dimness around them. Even so, they could see that the Me 410 seemed to be flying on, weaving erratically and losing height because of the fire in its starboard engine. Branse positioned himself behind the enemy aircraft and tried to fire a further burst but the guns would not respond because they had become over-heated. When Burbridge and Bill Skelton flew alongside, they saw that the top hatch was open. As they continued to circle they watched the fuselage and tailplane become enveloped by flames. Burbridge was preparing to fire again when the 410 suddenly spiralled down through the cloud later and they saw it splash into the sea

about five miles south of Selsey Bill. More victories would follow in June and in July and August they destroyed three V1s over southern England.

A Ju 88 trying to land at Juvincourt on the night of 14/15 June was shot down by Flight Lieutenant J. Tweedale and Flying Officer L. I. Cunningham on 157 Squadron in another Mosquito NF.XIX. Eleven other enemy aircraft were shot down over the continent by Mosquito crews including a Bf 110 piloted by Feldwebel Robert Schratter of 9/NJG5 by Squadron Leader Russ Bannock RCAF and Flying Officer Bob Bruce, their first victory since joining 418 Squadron a few days earlier. Schratter, who had five victories, was killed. Bruce recalls: 'We wasted no time and after practice trips on the first three days set off on our first Intruder, a two-hour patrol off Bourges-Avord airfield. Luck was with us and after some time we spotted the exhaust of a night-fighter as it passed overhead. We picked it up as it turned on final approach but had to break off to the south due to heavy anti-aircraft fire. Fortunately for us the pilot switched on his landing lights. We attacked in a shallow dive and fired a burst of cannon and machine guns. As it exploded and caught fire we recognized it as a Me 110. We were subjected to a barrage of AA fire from the north side of the airfield and we turned sharply to the left to avoid this wall of fire but Russ was reefing so hard on the elevator we did a high-speed stall just as we almost turned 180 degrees. We exited to the west of the field still carrying two bombs under the wings and by the time we reached Holmsley South our fuel reserves were getting low. It was a memorable first trip.'

On Thursday 15th/Friday 16th June another inspired Mosquito pairing, Squadron Leader F. S. 'Gon' Gonsalves and Flight Lieutenant Basil Duckett on 85 Squadron were on patrol over Belgium. They made a wide orbit of Sint Trond airfield and picked up a contact. Closing to 200 feet they recognized it as a Bf 110 with long-range tanks. Gonsalves dropped back to 600 feet and fired a one-second burst, which produced a strike on the back of the fuselage. He closed in to 400 feet and gave a further burst, which blew up the starboard engine then broke to starboard to avoid the debris flying back. From 3,500 feet both men watched the enemy aircraft going down in a starboard turn until finally it hit the ground and blew up in the dispersal area east of the airfield. Resuming their patrol Duckett again reported a contact head-on at one-mile range and Gonsalves closed in to recognize another Bf 110 with long-range tanks at 4,000 feet. He fired a short burst with no results and then closed in but he was too fast and he found himself flying in formation with the Messerschmitt 100 yards away on their port side. Gonsalves turned to port and gave a good long burst and scored strikes near the port engine but there was no fire. He pulled up to have another look but visual was lost and contact could not be regained so Gonsalves concluded that he must have gone down. Gonsalves and Duckett's victim in the first encounter was Bf 110 G9+1Z of 12./NJG1. It crashed nine kilometres west of Tongres between Sint Trond and Maastricht. Unteroffizier Heinz Barwolf (replacement pilot, no victories), who was injured and Unteroffizier Fischer, bordfunker, bailed out. Obergefreiter Edmund Kirsch the 23-year-old bordschütze was killed. Flight Lieutenant John Owen 'Jimmy' Mathews and Warrant Officer Alan 'Penny' Penrose on 157 destroyed a Ju 188 the same night. He 219A-0 G9+RK of 2./NJG1 was also lost,

Unteroffizier 'Willi' Beyer and Obergefreiter Horst Walter both being killed. Flying Officers R. R. Smart and J. K. Sutcliffe on 605 Squadron flying a Mosquito NF.II on an 'Intruder' sortie shot down Ju 88C-6 (D5+CV) flown by Feldwebel Walter Schlette of 10/NJG3 on a calibration flight from Aalborg West airfield. Schlette, who had one victory, Unteroffizier Hans Müller, funker and Obergefreiter Ernst Harmening, bordschütze, were killed. Smart and Sutcliffe claimed Do 217M-1 U5+CK of 2.KG2 on 13/14 July during another 'Intruder' near Eindhoven.

Helmut Lent fired only 57 rounds in seven minutes to shoot down three Lancasters on 15/16 June. He would be the first night fighter pilot to claim 100 Night-Abschüsse. Promoted to Oberstleutnant, on 31 July he was awarded the Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub, Schwertern und Brillanten in recognition of his 110 confirmed air kills, the first of two night-fighter pilots to be awarded the decoration.

On the night of Friday 16th/Saturday 17th June meanwhile, 405 aircraft of Bomber Command began a new campaign against V1 flying-bomb launching sites in the Pas de Calais with raids on four targets accurately marked by 'Oboe' Mosquitoes. A Ju 88, which crashed in the Pas de Cancale was possibly shot down by Flying Officer Andy Miller DFC and Flying Officer Freddie Bone on 169 Squadron. Hauptmann Herbert Lorenz, who had one night Abschuss, Feldwebel Rudolf Scheuermann, bordfunker and Flieger Harry Huth, bordschütze, were killed. Another bomber force comprising 321 Halifaxes, Lancasters and Mosquitoes raided the synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade/Holten. No aircraft were lost on the raids in Northern France but 31 RAF aircraft were missing from the operation to Sterkrade/Holten though 'Tame Boar' Nachtjagd claimed 37 kills. The route of the bomber stream passed near a German night-fighter beacon at Bocholt just thirty miles from Sterkrade and the Jägerleitoffizier (JLO, or GCI-controller) had chosen this beacon as the holding point for his night fighters. Hauptmann Heinz Strüning of 3./NJG1 claimed two Halifax victims at Beacon 'Gorilla' for his 51-52nd victories.

East of Beacon 'Brisbar' Unteroffizier Hugo Oppermann of 1./NJG1 claimed a Halifax for his only Abschuss and Oberleutnant Josef Nabrich of 3./NJG1 claimed two Halifaxes at Beacon 'Kürfurst' for his fifteenth Abschüsse. Oberleutnant Erich Lippert of 10./NJG3, Major Suren Geert Schäfer of 2./NJG2, Leutnant Paul Fehre of 5./NJG3, Leutnant Walter Briegleb of 10./NJG3 and Oberleutnant Georg Fengler of Stab IV/NJG1 also claimed a Viermot each at 'Kürfurst'. Lippert was killed on 4 December 1944, having scored three Abschüsse. Feldwebel 'Willi' Morlock of 3./NJG1 claimed a Halifax at 'Brisbar' and another northwest of Tilburg to take his score to 25 Abschüsse. In all, fifteen crews of II./NJG1 took off from Deelen and returned with seven victories without loss. These included two Viermot kills in the Venlo-Arnhem area by Oberleutnant Johannes Hager, Staffelkapitän of the 6th Staffel. Twenty-two of the bombers that were missing were Halifaxes including seven out of 23 dispatched by 77 Squadron from Full Sutton near York. On 22 June Hager's He 219A-0 'Owl' was hit over the Scheldt estuary by return fire from a tail gunner. Feldwebel Huberus von Bergen the bordfunker was killed. Feldwebel Robert Körschgen the bordshütze bailed out and was slightly

wounded in the process. The damaged aircraft was landed safely at Eindhoven airfield by Hager who was unhurt.

On 17/18 June 54 Mosquitoes were on 'Serrate', 'Intruder' and 'Diver' patrols and their patrols over Holland produced results for two 100 Group crews. Near Eindhoven Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey E. Poulton and Flying Officer Arthur John Neville on 239 Squadron came across Ju 88s orbiting a beacon and fired at two of them. Ju 88G-l R4+NS of 8./NJG2, which crashed near Volkel airfield was claimed destroyed after it plunged earthwards on fire. Leutnant Harald Machleidt, a replacement pilot with no combat victories and Gefreiter Max Rinnerthaler, bordschütze, were killed. Unteroffizier Kurt Marth, bordfunker was wounded. The second Ju 88, which went down with one engine on fire and fairly soon went out was claimed as 'damaged'. When Flying Officer Philip Stanley Kendall DFC and Flight Lieutenant Charles Richard Hill DFC on 85 Squadron reached their patrol area at Soesterberg airfield it was not lit so they proceeded to Deelen, where similar conditions prevailed. They returned to Soesterberg and this time lights were seen and an aircraft with navigation lights on was landing. A red Very light was fired from the ground and almost immediately another aircraft put on its navigation lights and began flying round again. Kendall gave chase, putting down wheels and flaps to reduce speed and at 140 IAS intercepted the aircraft at 700 feet, just as it was turning onto the flarepath to attempt to land again. He fired two bursts, one second and two seconds, with half-ring deflection, at 150 yards range closing to 100 yards. Strikes were seen on the wing and in the fuselage and the aircraft caught fire, climbed to 1,500 feet, still burning navigation lights and then dived vertically and exploded on the ground 200 yards short of the end of the runway. Kendall broke away, retracted the undercarriage and flaps and climbed to 3,000 feet and took cine shots from approximately three miles range of the aircraft burning on the ground. The Mosquito continued its patrol near Soesterberg but nothing else was found and the crew set course for base and landed at 0243 hours. Kendall and Hill's victim was a Bf 110 of NJG1. Müller, pilot and 2 others KIA.

Twenty-year old Leutnant Karl Kern of 2./NJG4 piloting a Ju 88G-1 with his bordfunker, Gefreiter Johannes Langowski sitting directly behind him and Werner Klix the bordmechaniker to the rear, were chasing some Viermots back over the English Channel when suddenly an oil line burst in one of the BMW 801engines, spewing oil on the red-hot manifold. The engine instantly caught fire. Kern went into a steep dive in an attempt to extinguish the flames and Klix turned off the fuel line to try to stop the flames igniting the fuel. After losing several hundred metres the fire was out and they turned back to their base at Florennes. Although Klix had managed to extinguish the flames Kern could not hold altitude. The night fighter was capable of flying on one engine but it was difficult. His only hope was to land at the nearest airfield which Langowski found was just a few miles away, at Laon-Athies in northern France. Kern flew over the base and radioed the tower telling them of his problem. They gave him permission to land, but warned him of a marauding Mosquito in the area. Kern circled Laon-Athies two or three times but saw no sign of the British aircraft. His bordfunker said he could see no sign of it on

radar and Kern decided the Mosquito must have found prey elsewhere. He thought it was safe to land. But time was not on his side. The Ju 88's altitude was down to 1000 metres. Kern told his crew they were going straight in as they could not afford to delay any longer. The crew were very nervous. They had been shot down before but this was something different; they had never had engine fires to contend with and now this aircraft wanted to fly sideways. They could see that Kern was having great difficulty in holding the Ju 88 steady. Klix was highly-strung at the best of times but now he panicked. He followed procedure and fired a flare underneath the aircraft to tell the tower they were coming in on the next pass. He had forgotten about the marauding Mosquito. The flare illuminated the aircraft in a ball of yellow light.

Karl Kern[70] takes up the story. 'We were lit up like a Christmas tree. I swore at Klix and said I hoped the Mosquito was not still around, but I spoke too soon. There was a terrific clatter and the sound of tearing metal; the Mosquito was on our tail and firing at us. I felt some of the bullets hit the back of my seat. I saw Klix fall. He had obviously been hit. I called to my bordfunker but did not get an answer. All of a sudden the cockpit filled with flames. A bullet must have pierced the petrol tank beneath my seat and everything was on fire. I could feel the flames burning my face. I reached up and flipped the lever above my head. The top of my canopy flew off; I had difficulty undoing my harness. I could not see anything for the fire; the rushing wind seemed to be fanning the flames even more. At last my harness came free. I scrambled to get out as fast as I could. I got my head and shoulders out of the cockpit. The wind struck me hard and seemed to suck me out the rest of the way. I briefly wondered about hitting the tail of the plane, but in an instant I was clear. I could see my burning plane plunging towards the ground. My hands, face and the whole of my head were burning. My gloves seemed to have melted into my hands. I was a bit worried as to our altitude when I jumped; I knew we were only at 1000 metres when we first came over the base. Everything happened so quickly I was not sure how much more altitude we had lost. 1 suddenly realised that my helmet was on fire and it was burning my hair. I managed to rip it off and I guess the wind must have put out the fire; either that or the flames went out when all my hair had gone. I don't remember hitting the ground. I must have blacked out. The next thing I knew was some medical personnel lifting me up and putting me in an ambulance. I asked about my crew but somebody said they did not get out. I felt very sorry for them.'

Kern was examined by a doctor and told he had second-degree burns to his hands and face and minor burns to his scalp, but apart from that he was fine. He expected to spend a few weeks in the hospital. He thought about his crew and wondered if he should contact their families. He knew Major Herget his Kommandant would write to them but he thought he should go and see them when he was well enough.

But Kern was in for a surprise. The doctor patched him up and discharged him and he was told to take some leave: 'Three weeks should about do it, come back when you feel better,' was all he said to him. Kern spent the next three weeks with his French girlfriend. He remembers, 'We had a wonderful time

together just doing what all young lovers do. The fact I had no hair and I was very clumsy due to my hands being burnt added to the fun of it all. But I did miss my flying and I was not too sorry when my leave was up.'[71]

He never did see his French girlfriend again but they did stay in touch. As it was they could never have married because Karl, whose real name was Charles, had been born a Frenchman in Strasbourg, Alsace on 3 January 1924 and had been ordered into the German armed forces when his homeland had been annexed. Having volunteered for the Luftwaffe he could not have returned to France after the war. He would have been considered a traitor.

During a 'Day Ranger' to northern Holland and the Friesians on 21 June in Mosquito FB.VI PZ203/X Squadron Leader Paul Wattling Rabone DFC and Flying Officer Frederick Charles Johns DFC on 515 Squadron destroyed Bf 110G-4 G9+NS of 8./NJG1, which had just taken off from Eelde airfield at 1519 hours. Rabone and Johns approached from astern and promptly attacked with a 3½-second burst of cannon. No strikes were observed, so Rabone fired again. This time the two-second burst hit the starboard engine and pieces flew off before the Bf 110G-4 crashed on the northern side of Eelde airfield killing Unteroffiziers Herbert Beyer (21, with one night victory) and Hans Petersmann the 21-year old bordfunker and 20-year old Obergefreiter Franz Riedel, bordschütze. Later, Rabone wrote graphically: 'Before the Hun got his breath back a delightful third burst of cannon was presented at fifty yards range at a height or about 100 feet. This created havoc - the Me 110's starboard wing and starboard engine burst into flames, the port engine belched forth black smoke and the enemy aircraft dived into the ground enveloped in a mass of flames, smoke and destruction. Mosquito landed at Little Snoring at 1630 hours after a most enjoyable afternoon's sport.' It was Rabone's 7th victory.

That night, Wednesday 21st/Thursday 22nd June, the shortest night of the year, 133 Lancasters and six Mosquitoes headed for the synthetic oil plant at Wesseling, a town nine miles south of Cologne and 123 Lancasters and nine Mosquitoes set out for another synthetic oil plant, at Scholven/Buer. Clear weather conditions were forecast for both target areas, which were to be bombed simultaneously and it was planned to use the low-level marking method but both targets were covered by 10/10ths cloud so at Wesseling H_2S was used and at Scholven/Buer Path Finder aircraft provided 'Oboe'-based sky-marking instead. Eight Lancasters of the Scholven/Buer force were shot down and while this was bad enough for the squadrons concerned, the Wesseling force lost 37 aircraft (27.8 per cent of the force) all of which, falling victim to an effective 'Tame Boar' operation. I./NJG1 was credited with sixteen kills that were claimed by eight 'Owl' crews and II./NJG1 received credit for six victories. Three squadrons (44, 49 and 619) each lost six Lancasters and there were individual losses too. Over Holland and Belgium Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer, Kommandeur of IV./NJG1 claimed four 'Lanki's' - three of them in quick succession - to take his score to 84. At 0125 he destroyed Lancaster III LM592 'Q-Queenie' on 44 Squadron which exploded over Riethoven with the loss of Pilot Officer Edwin Albert Canty RAAF and his crew. Over Belgium, two kilometres south of Meeuwen, five minutes later he shot down Lancaster I ME683 EM-W on 207 Squadron. Pilot Officer Alvin Van Dyke

Corless RCAF and crew were killed. Six minutes later he destroyed Lancaster LM434 on 44 Squadron five kilometres (3.1 miles) south of Opoeteren. Pilot Officer Neville John Wingrove Scholtz, a Rhodesian and one crewmember were killed; four were taken prisoner and one evaded. Finally, at 0205, six kilometres (3.7 miles) south of Hamont, he shot down Lancaster I ME843 on 630 Squadron. There were no survivors on the crew of Pilot Officer Robert Cecil Hooper DFC. Hauptmann Ernst Wilhelm Modrow of 1./NJG1 claimed four Lancasters also. His first and second 'Lankis' fell at Beacon 'Gorilla' at 0112 and 0124, the third at 0139 hours NNW of Duisburg and the fourth north of Deelen at 0201 to take his score to 25 Abschüsse.

Flight Lieutenant David Murray Peden RCAF on 214 Squadron in 100 Group got his Fortress II (SR381 BU-F) home after supporting the raid on Scholven-Buer despite being badly shot about by a Me 210 whose fire set light to the starboard inner engine. Soon after, a Ju 88 caused further damage and wounded two of the crew. Course was set for Woodbridge and upon landing a collision occurred with a 61 Squadron Lancaster. Peden was born in Winnipeg, but spent ten years of his life in Portage la Prairie, between the ages of six and 16. He credits Portage Collegiate Institute's cadet corps as being the jumpstart for his desire to pursue a military career.[72]

There was no word from the Fortress II skippered by 20-year old Pilot Officer John Douglas Cassan RAFVR, who had taken SR382 BU-B off from Oulton at 2352 hours on 21 June to support the raid on Scholven-Buer. 'Johnny' Cassan, as he was known to his friends and family was from Clevedon, Somerset, where he lived with his parents. Written beside the cockpit window he had the words *The Avenger* painted on it. Cassan headed east over the North Sea to Holland and then on to the Ruhr Valley. At some time around 0100 hours while returning from the raid on Germany BU-B came under attack by a Bf 110 piloted by Hauptmann Heinz Strüning of NJG1. Although the Fortress survived the first attacking pass, a second, two minutes later, proved disastrous, knocking out the inboard starboard engine and rendering the aircraft's controls useless. Instructing the co-pilot to feather the engines Cassan then ordered the rest of the crew to stand-by for an emergency jump, but in the next moment the aircraft was diving out of control for the ground. Somehow by piloting skill, or just plain luck, Cassan managed to pull the aircraft's nose up for just long enough so that the crew could bail out, While five managed to do so, Cassan, Sergeant Sydney H. Bryant RAFVR his 20-year old co-pilot, Flight Sergeant George Orr his 21-year old navigator of Glasgow, Scotland and Flight Sergeant Alex Sharpe RAFVR the 23-year old mid-upper gunner did not. Some years later one of the survivors reportedly said that when he bailed out 'The pilot and co-pilot were struggling with the aircraft's controls hoping to make a forced landing.' The assumption is that one or more of the crew were badly wounded in the attack and that their only chance of survival was to attempt a crash landing. Whatever the intentions of the pilot and co-pilot some moments later the aircraft, in flames, crashed into the ground where it quickly burnt out. By the time German soldiers arrived, some minutes later, four crew lay dead in the wreckage and Sergeant Norman W. S. Abbott RAFVR from Feltham, Middlesex, lay hidden beneath it. It would seem

that he left it a little late bailing out for although his parachute deployed the aircraft crashed down upon him.

Two days later four of the crew were buried at what was then known as the 'English Graveyard' in Uden (now Uden War Cemetery) attended by a military Guard of Honour made up of Luftwaffe personnel. Only on the 28th when the wreckage of BU-B was being removed was the body of Norman Abbott found under the remains of the fuselage with an open parachute attached. For reasons unknown he was not taken to Uden to be buried with his fallen comrades. Instead on 1 July he was buried in the local civilian cemetery at Bergharen only to be later exhumed during the late 1940s and re-interred in the war cemetery at Jonkerbos some miles away. Flying Officer W. Milne the special operator was taken into captivity. Warrant Officer Douglas R. Jennings RCAF from Nova Scotia was the only crew member to evade capture. Taken originally to a German run hospital with shrapnel in his leg he managed to escape later disguised as a policeman with the help of the Dutch Resistance and return to Great Britain. Flight Sergeant Harry Whatton the RAF wireless operator was repatriated during 1945. Sergeant Tom S. Sparks RAF was taken prisoner of war. After bailing out Sparks was given shelter by a Dutch Resistance group. Unfortunately it had unknowingly been infiltrated by the Germans. Put in a van to be transported to a 'safe house' Sparks found on reaching its destination that instead of eluding capture he was surrounded by a dozen or so German soldiers all pointing rifles at him.

On 23/24 June 390 heavies and 22 Mosquitoes carried out attacks on four V1 sites in the Pas de Calais Area and 203 Lancasters and four Mosquitoes set out for rail yards at Limoges and Saintes. On 24 June 321 aircraft including 200 Halifaxes and 106 Lancasters attacked three V1 sites in the clear over the Pas de Calais without loss. That night, 739 aircraft of all groups attacked seven V1 sites. It was a clear, moonlit night and 22 Lancasters were lost, mostly to night fighters. A 139 Squadron Mosquito B.XX; one of 27 that went to Berlin, was shot down thirty kilometres northwest of the 'Big City' by Leutnant Ernst-Ewald Hittler of 3./NJG1 for his fifth and final victory. Twenty-five year old Flight Lieutenant William Wrixon Boylson DFC* RAAF and Squadron Leader George Heath Wilson DSO DFC were killed. Next day 323 aircraft pounded three more V1 sites for the loss of two Halifaxes that bombed a flying-bomb site at Montorgueil.

On Saturday 24/Sunday 25 June Flight Lieutenant Denis Welfare DFC* and Flying Officer 'Taffy' Bellis DFC* of 239 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 near Paris, they shot down a Me 410 east of the French capital two nights later when 100 Group 'Serrate' Squadrons supported 1,049 bombers in attacks on V1 sites and other targets in northern France. Mosquito crews claimed six enemy aircraft shot down on 27/28 June. Near Brussels Flight Lieutenant Donald Ridgewell 'Podge' Howard and Flying Officer Frank A. W. 'Sticky' Clay of 239 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 - probably Ju 88G-1 D5+AF piloted by Major Franz Buschmann of IV/NJG3 who had eight victories. He and his bordfunker Unteroffizier Heinrich Schmalfeldt were killed. Unteroffizier Heinrich Bode, bordshütze who was wounded, bailed out safely. A FW 190 was also destroyed by their CO Wing Commander Paul M. J. Evans and navigator Flying Officer

'Dickie' Perks DFC. Near the French side of the Channel they picked up an IFF contact which turned out to be a FW 190. Evans shot it down from behind but it exploded covering the Mosquito with burning petrol, which burnt off most of the doped control surfaces and made the aircraft difficult to control. Evans made a very fast landing at Manston after numerous trials at height to determine at what speed he would lose control. Two 141 Squadron crews failed to return to West Raynham. Flight Lieutenant Herbert R. Hampshire and Warrant Officer Alan A. W. Melrose were shot down seven kilometres south-east of Roeselare (Roulers) in Belgium by 28-year old Oberleutnant Heinz Ferger of 3./NJG3. Ferger, who had been shot down with severe burns over West Flanders in the winter of 1943-44 put in a claim for his 18th Abschuss, the NF.II crashing at Izegem. Hampshire and Melrose who were on their last operation, were killed.

Flight Lieutenant P. S. 'Paddy' Engelbach and Flying Officer Ronald S. Mallett DFC meanwhile, had patrolled north Holland for an hour and Mallett could tell that they were being picked up by a German night-fighter. Near Weert in Limburg their pursuer shot the tail off their Mosquito NF.II killing Mallet. Engelbach was thrown through the canopy by the explosion and he survived.[73] Squadron Leader Graham Rice and Flying Officer 'Jimmie' Rogerson on 141 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 in the Cambrai area for their third victory while Warrant Officers Harry 'Butch' Welham and 'Gus' Hollis tracked and hunted an AI contact five miles north of Eindhoven. Their Mosquito (DZ240) was the same aircraft they had flown when they shot down their first enemy aircraft - a Me 410 - on 14/15 June. Clearly painted in large white letters on the pilot's side of the Mosquito's nose was the double entendre 'SHYTOT. Welham reduced height to 14,000 feet and closed in on the contact. He recalls:

'A Ju 88 [possibly the Ju 88G-1 of 4./NJG3 flown by Unteroffizier Eugen Wilfert, an inexperienced replacement pilot] appeared dead ahead, slightly above but we looked as if we were going to overshoot. Gus came on the intercom and in his lilting Welsh accent said, 'Throttle back; pull the nose up butch.' His nose was in his set, keeping track of the fir-tree-shaped blip on the 'Serrate' scope.

'Left, left, right, right,' he ordered. 'Thirty degrees above. Dead ahead, 2,000 feet.'

'I steered to the ideal spot, 400 yards behind (the four 20mm Hispanos were synchronized for 400 yards). I lined him up through the circular gunsight, my right thumb ready to press the firing button on top of the stick and aimed between the cockpit and engine.

'Gus said clearly, 'Go on, shoot!'

'I said, 'OK,' and I let fly a two-second burst. As the cannons fired beneath our feet the seats vibrated and dust flew up from the floor all around the cockpit. A fire started in the engine and the wing and the kite went down in a spiral burning all the while, exploding on the ground [at Arendonck, Belgium] about six miles south of Tilburg.' (Wilfert, Obergefreiter Karl Martin, bordfunker and Gefreiter Rudolf Scherbaum, bordschütze were killed).

Pilot Officer Clinton Warren Chown, born on 4 November 1920 at Dubuc, Saskatchewan and Flight Sergeant D. G. N. Veitch on 515 Squadron meanwhile

had set off from Little Snoring to patrol Gilze-Volkel-Venlo-Eindhoven. For three-quarters of an hour they bombed Venlo airfield and created a substantial fire emitting flashes for fifteen minutes before returning to Eindhoven for a second look. There was no cloud, visibility was 'good' and the airfield had its north-south flarepath well lit. On their approach four red cartridges were fired from another aircraft and three of the airfield identification bars at the southern end almost immediately were switched off and a single red cartridge was fired from the ground. Chown gave chase at 1,500 feet and spotted the outline of an aircraft with a green bow light and red downward identification light under the tail. He closed to 200 yards and recognized it as a Ju 88 (B3+LT of 9./KG54 flown by Unteroffizier Gotthard Seehaber, which was returning after a mine laying operation in the invasion area). Chown delivered a stern attack with a two-second-burst of cannon fire, which recorded one strike on the Junker's fuselage. The Mosquito pilot closed to 150 yards and he delivered a second stern attack with a three second burst. The Ju 88 immediately exploded killing Seehaber, Gefreiter Kurt Volker, Obergefreiters Walter Oldenbruch and Hermann Patzel and scattering debris through the sky as it disintegrated before crashing into a house, killing three children. Chown and Veitch orbited the scene and took photos of the burning enemy bomber before breaking away and returning home.

On Wednesday 28th/Thursday 29th June 230 bombers hit the railway yards at Blainville and Metz for the loss of eighteen Halifaxes and two Lancasters. Thirteen 'Tame Boar' crews were credited with 21 Viermots. Five of the missing Halifaxes were on 102 Squadron; one of these (NA502) being claimed by Major Paul Semrau of II,/NJG2 who claimed four Halifaxes in total, the first north of Rouen, two at Etrepagny and the last at Soissons. Oberstleutnant Günther Radusch of NJG2 claimed a Halifax at Compiègne and another, also at Soissons. Halifax MZ644 'V-Victor' on 102 Squadron was lost after being shot up by another Halifax, possibly on 10 Squadron when carrying out a violent corkscrew. Halifax III LW717 ZA-W on 10 Squadron skippered by 23-year old Pilot Officer Martin Livesey was claimed by Unteroffizier Heinz Siebert of 2,/NJG5 for his eighth Abschuss, the aircraft crashing near Feigneux (Oise), five kilometres northeast of Crepy-en-Valois. All seven crew were killed. Siebert was wounded on 16 March 1945 in a crash-landing at Beyreuth airfield on return from a sortie. All 33 Mosquitoes of the LNSF that went to Saarbrücken and ten that were despatched to drop 4,000lb 'Cookies' from 32,000 feet on the Scholven/Buer oil plant in the Ruhr returned, though on the latter the Mosquito crewed by Flight Lieutenant David 'Russ' Russell and his navigator Flying Officer 'Barks' Barker on 109 Squadron, who had completed a tour on Stirlings and who were on their third Mosquito trip, were badly shot about by a night-fighter and on return an engine caught fire as the Mosquito neared Ramsgate and they crash-landed at Manston.

On 30 June/1 July Squadron Leader Paul Rabone DFC and Flying Officer Fred Johns DFC on 515 Squadron destroyed a He 111 and a Ju W34 at Jägel and Schleswig to take Rabone's score to nine confirmed victories.[74] Over France Flight Lieutenant Dennis Raby DFC and Flight Sergeant 'Jimmy' Flint DFM on 239 Squadron in a Mosquito FB.VI destroyed Ju 88 711114 of 5./NJG2 piloted

by Unteroffizier Erich Pollmer, who had one known victory, a Viermot at Mönchengladbach-Aachen on 18 March 1944. Raby and Flint stalked the Junkers and were fired at by the enemy air gunner but his tracer passed harmlessly over the top of the Mosquito, Raby fired a two-second burst from 450 feet and saw strikes all along the port fuselage and wing and the port engine burst into flames. He pumped another two-second burst into the doomed Junkers, which exploded, scattering debris into the path of the charging Mosquito. As it fell vertically to earth Raby continued to pepper the machine, finally breaking away just before another explosion tore the wings off the night fighter. It crashed south east of Dieppe in a massive explosion. Unteroffizier Erich Pollmer was wounded. Other crew details are unknown.

On Tuesday 4th/Wednesday 5th July, 231 Lancasters and fifteen Mosquitoes carried out an accurate attack on the flying-bomb store at Ste-Leu-D'Esserent. Another 282 Lancasters and five Mosquitoes attacked railway yards at Orléans and Villeneuve-Ste-Georges. Three Lancasters were lost on Orléans and eleven failed to return from the attack on Villeneuve. Lancaster I KB756 'Q-Queenie' on 428 'Ghost Squadron' RCAF flown by 21-year old Pilot Officer Wilfred Charles Gay was shot down by Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm 'Willi' Glitz of Stab./NJG2 at 4000 metres at 0043 hours for the second of three Abschüsse this night. Wilf Gay and Flight Sergeant Stanley John Swartz, the rear gunner who was probably wounded in the attack and had not jumped, were killed. Gay left a widow. By some miracle the five other crewmembers safely bailed out.

It is thought that Lancaster I ME699 on 44 Squadron, which was one of thirteen Lancasters lost on the raid on Ste-Leu, was shot down by Unteroffizier Günther S. Schlomberg of 3./NJG3 at 0149 hours in the Breteuil/Clermont area. The Australian pilot, 21-year old Flying Officer William Archibald Young, ordered the crew to bail out but only the flight engineer and air bomber managed it. The usual rear gunner was taken ill before the flight and was replaced by 20-year old Sergeant Ronald Houseman for his first and final operation. Twenty-three year old Flying Officer Harold Braathen RCAF was also on his first operation, flying as an extra navigator to gain experience. This was the second of three Abschüsse credited to Unteroffizier Günther Schlomberg who was killed later during a practice flight on 11 August near Cuxhaven.

Sixty-one Mosquitoes were on patrol this night. Warrant Officer R. E. Preston and Sergeant F. Verity on 515 Squadron took off on a 'Night Ranger'[75] to Coulommiers airfield via Southwold and North Beveland. They reached the enemy night-fighter base at 0205 hours but the base was inactive so they stooged around for three-quarters of an hour before returning. This time their approach signalled the double flarepath to be lit. Obviously, the base anticipated that one of its fighters was returning. Preston reduced height to 1,000 feet. Verity obtained a visual sighting of the enemy aircraft at 300-400 yards range. It was a Ju 88 and it was on a southerly course at about their height. Preston gave chase but the Junkers started weaving before turning starboard and diving. Undeterred, Preston followed. As the Ju 88 pulled out of its dive at treetop height, it appeared right in his sights and Preston gave it

a three-second-burst of cannon at 200 yards. It set the Ju 88's starboard engine on fire and the aircraft instantly disintegrated, scattering burning debris into the air like an exploding firework. Preston circled the scene before bombing the airfield with two 500lb GP bombs, which exploded in the south side of the airfield. There was no opposition and only four inefficient searchlights vainly probed the cloudy sky. Not satisfied with their night's work, Preston and Verity attacked two small freighters moored side by side in the Zuid Beveland Canal at the Westerschelde lock gates with a three-second-burst of cannon fire. Strikes were seen on the bow of one of the ships.

On 5/6 July four Mosquito FB.VIs on 23 Squadron flew the first Squadron 'Intruder' operation from Little Snoring since returning from the Mediterranean with sorties against enemy airfields. Flying Officer P. G. Bailey and Flying Officer J. O. Murphy on 169 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 while a Bf 110G-4 crashed near Compiegne. Ju 88 751065 of 5./NJG2 crashed near Chartres, killing Oberfeldwebel Fritz Farrherr and Obergefreiter Heinz Boehme, bordschütze. The bordfunker, Gefreiter Josef Schmid, who was wounded, bailed out. Bf 110G-4 C9+HK of 2./NJG5, which crashed near Compiegne is believed to be one of two aircraft shot down by Squadron Leader J. S. Booth DFC* and Flying Officer K. Dear DFC on 239 Squadron. Leutnant Joachim Hanss and Feldwebel Kurt Stein, bordschütze were killed. Unteroffizier Wolfgang Wehrhan, bordfunker was wounded. Hanss was an 'Experte' with seven night-Abschüsse.

On 7/8 July Squadron Leader Graham Rice and Flying Officer 'Jimmie' Rogerson on 141 Squadron in a Mosquito NF.II took off from West Raynham at 2317 hours on a 'Serrate' patrol in support of Bomber Command attacks on Ste-Lou-D'Esserent and Vaires. They crossed the enemy coast between Calais and Dunkirk and about twenty miles south of Abbeville at 15,000 feet Rogerson picked up an AI contact dead ahead and slightly below. Rice turned hard port and the contact passed overhead, when a visual was obtained on very bright exhausts. At 1,000 feet range the contact was identified as a twin engined aircraft travelling at high speed and Rice followed at full throttle but after about three minutes the contact disappeared in interference and could not be recognized. It was thought that the contact was probably a Me 410. Rice turned back on track and five minutes later an AI contact was obtained dead ahead and below at about eight miles northwest of Amiens at 10,000 feet. The contact was allowed to come in to 4,000 feet range and Rice went into a hard turn through 180° as Rogerson obtained contact dead ahead and still below at 8,000 feet range. It was weaving gently and made two hard turns of 90° to starboard with Rice following hard and losing height to come in from below. After about ten minute's chase a visual was obtained at 2,000 feet range at 10,000 feet and Rice closing in quickly to 600 feet could make out an aircraft with twin fins and exhausts peculiar to a Bf 110 (most likely Bf 110G-4 of 2./NJG3). At this moment the German pilot apparently became aware of the presence of the Mosquito and made a hard turn to starboard. Rice gave 1½ ring deflection and opened fire with a four second burst at 600 feet range. Strikes were seen all along the top of the mainplane leading to a large explosion in the fuselage, which was quickly well on fire. The 110 turned over on its back

and passed underneath the Mosquito and Rice and Rogerson followed down to 3,000 feet range on AI before the blip disappeared. As Rice straightened up and orbited to look for the aircraft a terrific explosion was seen directly below them and scattered pieces floated down in flames. One large remnant hit the ground with a further explosion. The Bf 110G-4 crashed five kilometres west of Chièvres in Belgium. The pilot and Gefreiter Richard Reiff, who were wounded, bailed out safely. Obergefreiter Edmund Hejduck was killed.

Nachtjäger successes against Mosquitoes now were few. On 10/11 July Major Hans Karlewski of 2./NJG1 shot down Mosquito XVI PF380 on 692 Squadron off Terschelling on their way home from Berlin for his fifth victory. Wing Commander Stephen Delancey Watts DSO DFC MiD RNZAF and Pilot Officer Archibald Alexander Matheson DFM RNZAF were lost without trace.

To meet the threat posed by the Allied invasion twenty day fighter Gruppen and one night fighter Geschwader had been withdrawn from the defence of the Reich, together with fifty light flak batteries and 140 heavy batteries, which included the bulk of the railway flak. 3,500 medium and light guns had already been moved from the Reich to the Channel coast but Nachtjagd had to put up with an increasing number of bombing raids and surprise strafing attacks on its airfields, both by day and by night. The increasing weight of these attacks forced 'Beppo' Schmid to withdraw many Nachtjagd units from bases in the Low Countries and northern France and to deploy these Gruppen to airfields deep into the Reich. These were the first signs of Nachtjagd's final struggle with a vastly superior adversary, in which the arm would soon become entangled.

Endnotes Chapter 5

54 'Instep' was a patrol seeking air activity in Bay of Biscay, 'Rangers' were operations to engage air and ground targets within a wide but specified area.

55 LeBoutte was given a staff position in London, reaching the rank of Wing Commander DFC CdeG. (After the war Group Captain LeBoutte served in Brussels at SHAEF and he was one of the founder members of the Belgian Air Force. He served with distinction until retirement in 1956).

56 Starr destroyed a Me 410 and a UEA in 1944 to take his final score to 6 destroyed, 1 probable, 2 damaged, 2 destroyed on the ground + 1 V1 destroyed. He was killed early in January 1945 when he was flying as a passenger aboard an Avro Anson, which crashed near Dunkirk killing everyone on board. He was en route to get married at the time.

57 Over England Feldwebel Johann Trenke and Unteroffizier Beier of 6./KG51 claimed three Lancasters and two Liberators shot down respectively.

58 *The Bombing of Nuremburg* by James Campbell (Futura 1973). Ward was taken prisoner.

59 An ex-385th Bomb Group USAAF B-17F-130-BO 42-30970, one of 14 B-17Fs received from the 8th Air Force in spring 1944.

60 A 515 Squadron Mosquito crewed by Flying Officers David Kay Foster and 20-year old Robert Stanley Ling were shot down by airfield defence flak at Leeuwarden and crashed into a

hangar. Both men were killed.

61 Bailey was taken in by the Dutch Underground but his immediate concern was for his wife Jean, who was eight months pregnant on 29 May and how she would react to the news that he was 'missing'. He spent three months with the Dutch Underground - even taking part in a raid on a post office to augment supplies of ration cards and money - before being sent down the escape lines to Belgium in August 1944. Unfortunately, the line had been infiltrated. Bailey, an American Fortress pilot by the name of Bill Lalley from Lowell, Michigan and Viv Connell, an RAAF Lancaster navigator from Broken Hill, NSW, were taken prisoner by the Germans. *Confounding the Reich* by Martin W. Bowman and Tom Cushing.

62 AI.Mk.X radar (US SCR 720/729 'Eleanora') developed by the Radiation Laboratory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and built by the Western Electric Co had a range of 8-10 miles. AI Mk X (unlike AI.Mk IV) had no backward coverage so before it could be used on high-level operations a quick interim answer was provided by a modification to 'Monica I', which until the tail warner was fitted, 85 and 157 Squadrons flew only low-level airfield intrusions.

63 Shaw and Standley-Smith's NS950 crashed between Hank and Dussen in the Noord-Brabant. Butterfield and Drew were flying PZ189.

64 Apart from the 515 Squadron Mosquito kill by Hauptmann Strüning, Leutnant Otto Teschner of 11./NJG1 dispatched a 36th BS/801st BG Carpetbagger Liberator SE of Brussels. Teschner was KIA on 25 December 1944 during aerial combat 3 km east of Dortmund. He had seven victories.

65 Flight Lieutenant 'Mickey' Phillips and Flight Lieutenant Derek Smith on 85 Squadron destroyed a Bf 110 near Paris.

66 Hanneck shot down five Lancasters and Halifaxes in June/July.

67 Schmidt became a Ritterkreuzträger on 27 July 1944 after achieving 31 night kills including three victories in a single night on 3/4 May. He transferred as Staffelkapitän to 9./NJG1 in December 1944. Credited with 43 victories in 171 sorties, all his victories were recorded at night. Interned by British troops at Schleswig Holstein and released in August 1945, he attended Heidelberg University obtaining a doctorate in Chemistry, married and fathered three children. Schmidt retired in 1984.

68 Actually a Ju 88G-l flown by Major Wilhelm 'Willi' Herget, Kommandeur 1./NJG4. Herget bailed out uninjured, both his crew were wounded but also managed to bail out before the Junkers crashed near Charleroi. In January 1945 Herget underwent training to fly the new Messerschmitt Me 262 jet fighter. After service with Sonderkommision Kleinrath, an experimental operations unit, he joined Adolf Galland's Jagdverband 44 (JV44) in April 1945. His last sorties of WWII were flown with JV44, claiming one victory (a P-47 Thunderbolt) before the war's end. Herget is credited with 72 aerial victories (57 at night and sixteen during daylight operations) in 700 combat sorties. This included eight RAF bombers claimed in just 50 minutes during a raid on Frankfurt on the night of 20 December 1943. Burbridge persuaded Herget to speak at the NFLS at Ford in June 1945.

69 *Wings And A Prayer: The Life of Branse Burbridge* by Gillian R. Warson (The Lydia Press 2002).

70 He had one Abschuss, a USAAF Carpetbagger B-24 Liberator on 29/30 May 1944 but when Major Herget heard that 24 parachutes had emerged from the B-24 he wanted to know why Kern had not followed them down and shot them. (They were in fact supplies for the Resistance and not a troop carrier). Herget then announced that Kern and his crew were to be presented with the Iron Class 2nd Class.

71 *Someone Will Come For You* by David H. Kibble-White (The Erskine Press 2003).

72 In a working career that spanned 70 years, Peden was a crown attorney for Manitoba's Attorney General's Department and first Chairman of the Manitoba Securities Commission. A military scholar and accomplished author, he wrote three books, including *A Thousand Shall Fall*, which chronicles his experiences as a young bomber pilot on 214 Squadron.

73 On 2 February 1955 Squadron Leader Engelbach was killed when taking off from RAF Coltishall his Venom NF.2 clipped a tree and crashed.

74 In mid-July Rabone rejoined 23 Squadron and his run of luck finally ran out when he and Johns FTR from a 'Day Ranger' on 24 July. Rabone's body was washed ashore on Heligoland Island 3 months later.

75 Night operation to engage air and ground targets within a wide but specified area.

Chapter 6
Zweimots and Viermots

Oberleutnant Fritz Krause took off from Berlin Werneuchen in 'Weisse Elf - 'White 11', a FuG 217 J2 ('Neptun') equipped FW 190A-5 at 0040 hours on 8 July and crossed the Reich capital at a height of 8500 metres when he saw a Zweimot flying west caught in the searchlights. It was Mosquito B.XVI MM147 on 692 Squadron crewed by Flight Lieutenants Philip Kenneth Burley DFC and E. V. Saunders DFC. Krause closed in until he was 700 metres above; gave full throttle and dived. 'I went in too low,' he recalled 'and opened fire from approximately 200 metres from below and behind and kept firing as I closed. My first shots hit the right motor and an explosion followed. There was a burst of sparks and then a thick white trail of vapour. As I had overshot I had to stop the attack momentarily and found myself on the right, alongside the enemy aircraft, whose cockade and external fuel tanks I saw clearly and so was able to identify it without a doubt as a Mosquito. I fired ESN to draw the attention of the flak and the searchlight to my presence. The enemy 'corkscrewed' in an attempt to evade. Because of the thick 'white flag' of vapour I was able to follow him, although he had already left the searchlight zone in a north-westerly direction. Following the trail, I managed to attack twice more. At the third attack I noticed a further explosion on the right wing and an even stronger rain of sparks. At 2000 metres he disappeared, turning at a flat gliding-angle under me. I did not see the impact on the ground as this was hidden from my angle of view. On my return flight, passing Lake Koppeln I could estimate the crash-point as 60-70 kilometres northwest of Berlin. When I returned to base a report had already reached them about the crash of a burning enemy aircraft west of Granzow at 0155 hours at EE-25 nine kilometres NNW of Kürytz. My own plane was covered in oil from the damaged Mosquito. Burley was killed. Saunders bailed out and was taken prisoner.

The Mosquito Log by Alexander McKee.

During June 1944-April 1945 2nd TAF and Air Defence of Great britain destroyed at least 230 aircraft at night over the Channel, France, the Low Countries and Germany. In the run up to 'D-Day', 29 Squadron of the ADGB had been the first Mosquito unit equipped with the superior AI.Mk.VIII radar to be released for intruding over the Continent. Whilst still equipped with Beaufighter VIFs, the unit had had its first taste of offensive night operations in spring 1943 when it began 'Night Rangers' over airfields in German-occupied France. After converting to the Mosquito in the summer 29 Squadron reverted to defensive operations in the ADGB, finally mounting its first 'Intruders' over France on the night of 14 May 1944. Flying Officer R. G. 'Bob' Stainton, a 34-year old navigator on 29 Squadron at Hunsdon has vivid memories of a narrow escape he and his pilot Flight Lieutenant George E. Allison had during a 'Night Intruder' on the night of 5/6 July in Mosquito NF.XIII MM553: 'We night-prowlers liked the 'blanket of the dark' better than any romantic moonlight and this night we were to visit the

Coulommiers district again - Bretigny, Melun, Orly. There was a full moon. It was like daylight, as it had been on the night of the Nuremburg raid. The moon shone on French villages, woods and roads a thousand feet below us; for we had decided that at this height a 'cat's eye' FW 190 had less chance of spotting us, although light flak had more and we were still not low enough to escape German radar detection. No aerodromes seemed to be lit - ominous inactivity amid the luminous tones of countryside so peaceful and still. The Seine was a bent silver ribbon but we saw one aerial beacon flashing. This was awkward, as was the fact that Bill Provan[76] had already been a nuisance, shooting at trains and stirring up wasp nests. It was our choice of height, however, that directly led to trouble. We failed to pinpoint an important small lake and shortly after narrowly missed the Melun wireless masts. At least we now knew exactly where we were.

'Suddenly, near Bretigny, we were lit by a searchlight and tracer shells passed behind the tail. 'What's the time, Bob?' It was 0242 and we were both wishing the clock would go faster, when there was a series of explosions under us. We felt the shock and shudder of their impact. Other tracers wove light-tracks behind and above and as suddenly stopped. The Mosquito was shuddering (us with it). It even seemed to me that the fuel cocks were hot. I got my parachute on as George, without speaking, though I could hear him snort, dived almost to the ground. For a second I wasn't sure that he had control and began feathering the port propeller. There was no further attack. We managed to make a little height, 1,800 feet and in spite of a spasmodic shaking at the tail-end of the fuselage the aeroplane seemed to be holding her own. To lighten the load we dropped the wing-tanks and fired our cannon with empty bravado over that tranquil landscape. Headway was slow at 170 IAS (with the wind from port and against us, our ground-speed was about 145 mph) but it gave me time to double-check our course and track and ETA at the coast. We prayed for accuracy and that no part of the ship would fall off. I kept my parachute on, hoping that no predator would creep up behind us for we could not have taken evasive action. And how that black hole in the propeller-blade eyed us! We decided that if we met flak at the coast we would bail out. 'We'll paddle round to the beach-head in the dinghy.' Mild laughter. To our relief, neither event occurred.

'The crossing seemed age-long and George asked every few minutes exactly how far we had to go. However we did not quarrel. At last we could see the flashing 'K' of the Friston beacon west of Birling Gap. 'May Day! May Day!' There was no reply. We reached Ford to my wry satisfaction exactly as calculated and from 1,800 feet went straight in to land at 170 knots. High speed is vital when you have only one engine and too slow a turn becomes an immediate and fatal stall. The wheels were down but we used no flaps. Half way along the runway the wheels still had not touched nor had the speed dropped. We both lifted the undercarriage lever. She dug her nose in like the 'wheels' in a wheel-barrow race, hit something, threw her tail up and turned an exact somersault amid a splintering of wood and perspex. Something cold and sharp closed on my left hand, twisting it behind me. We were stuck fast, upside down. Metal creaked, petrol escaped with an overpowering stench. There followed the long drawn-out waiting for the gas

to burst into flames as it touched hot metal. I remember only one thought: 'At least you had your cricket.'[77] No? No fire? An age of waiting followed while I struggled in vain to free my left arm and the sweat dripped from my face.

'Forty-five minutes later the blood-wagon and crash crew arrived and began trying to hack us free. It was some time before they realized that if the aeroplane was upside down they were trying to cut their way through the guns. Someone had an attack of good sense and broke open the escape-hatch. It was the doctor. He also stuck a needle into my elevated bottom. They freed my arm. We were both very wide awake when they pulled us clear and I remember lying on the stretcher in a delicious twilight of sensation, comfortable and still conscious enough to appreciate this unbelievable freedom. Only later did I discover that the crash crew had stolen my torch, commando knife and the box of escape equipment we always carried.'[78]

By the middle of July when they could be identified and marked, railway targets in France were being bombed on a regular basis. On 12/13 July 378 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes sought marshalling yards at Culmont, Revigny near Nancy and Tours and 230 aircraft attacked flying bomb sites. Ten Lancasters were lost on Revigny and two on Culmont. Twenty-four year old Austrian Feldwebel Ernst Reitmeyer of 1./NJG5 claimed three Lancasters, at Ligny-en-Barrois, Joinville and Rolampont for his 16-18 Abschüsse. Among the other claimants was Major Werner 'Red' Hoffmann who claimed two 'Lankis' west of Neafchateau and southeast of Joinville for his 37-38th victories. This same night 168 aircraft flew a diversionary sweep over the North Sea without loss although Feldwebel Kleebauer of 8./NJG2 claimed a Stirling at Ste-Armand and Unteroffizier Rudolf Wilsch of 7./NJG1 claimed a Wellington off Ameland.

Two nights' later, on 14/15 July 242 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes returned to Revigny and also to the railway yards at Villeneuve. At Villeneuve the railways were hit though much of the bombing fell to the east of the target. At Revigny, although twenty PFF Lancasters took off, only one of them claimed to have identified the target by the light of the flares. A few crews bombed the flares in the burning aircraft but they were not in the railway yards. The remainder, under the instructions of the Australian master bomber, Flight Lieutenant Richard Wiseman DFC, abandoned the raid because the railway yards could not be identified and brought their bombs home. Seven Lancasters including that of the Deputy 'Master Bomber', 24-year old Squadron Leader George Davies DSO on 156 Squadron were lost. The latter was shot down at 0154 hours at Bar-le-Duc by Oberfeldwebel Reinhard Kollak of 8./NJG4 at a height of 2900 metres. The Lancaster broke in two, throwing Davies clear. Somehow he survived, landing in a tree and breaking his leg. He learned later that only one other member of his crew escaped unharmed and he was taken prisoner. Despite his injuries, Davies managed to evade capture for several days before eventually being caught in a 'safe house'. He spent the rest of the war in a PoW camp. Kollak scored his second victory of the night, at 0205 hours East of Ste-Dizier, when he claimed Lancaster LL837 BQ-'Q-Queenie' on 550 Squadron flown by Wing

Commander Patrick Edward Geoffrey Gunnell Connolly, the CO. All seven crew died.

Oberleutnant Erhard Peters of Stab I/NJG4 who had three victories, was shot down flying a Bf 110 during aerial combat with a Mosquito on 157 Squadron piloted by Flight Lieutenant Sandiford. Peters bailed out ten kilometres north of Reims.[79] The operational use of the Mosquito bomber had forced the Nachtjagd to reconsider the 'Wilde Sau' method to hunt these high-performance aircraft at high altitude with FW 190A-5s and A-6s and Bf 109Gs with 'Neptun' AI radar and a long-range fuel-tank. Oberleutnant Fritz Krause, a Staffelkapitän in the experimental I./NJGr10 at Berlin-Werneuchen commanded by Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl 'Nasen' ('nose') Müller whose main task this was, recalls:

'The new Heinkel 219 two-motor night-hunter to combat the Mosquito was not quite ready while the jet-hunter, the Me 262, was not available in sufficient numbers. So the task of testing the new methods fell mainly to one Staffel of the 'Wilde Sau'. We had to meet the two quite different uses of the Mosquito. Firstly, there was the nightly to bomb Berlin and secondly their use as Path Finders at high altitude in the Ruhr. Night after night, thirty to forty Mosquitoes flew to Berlin and dropped bombs and the psychological stress on the Berliners was considerable. Flak and searchlights were moved to Berlin without having any considerable or lasting effect. The Mosquitoes flew at altitudes above 30,000 feet and after crossing the Elbe lost height to fly over Berlin at the highest possible speed to avoid the concentrated flak. The direction of the flights across Berlin was different with each operation.

'A number of different tactical methods using night-hunters were tested but the following method, which I used with success, was the most effective. When the first of the incoming Mosquitoes crossed the Rhine, five single-engined hunters took off from Werneuchen and climbed to orbiting positions at 35,000 feet in the NE, NW, SE, SW and the centre' of Berlin, each position being marked by a strong master searchlight. This made it possible for at least one night-hunter, irrespective of the direction from which the attack was coming, to spot the Mosquitoes before they flew across the city. (As the single engined fighter's speed advantage over the Mosquito was only 60 kph there was only a short time available for hunting so a greater speed was required to catch the Mosquitoes and this was obtained by making a steep dive from the waiting position). Of course this method depended on good weather and visibility so that the searchlights could pick up the plane at high altitude. Up to 25,000 feet the flak had a fire-free zone but the area above this limit was reserved for the hunters. The Mosquitoes usually entered Berlin at around 20,000 feet and the problem now was that the hunters had to avoid their own flak. I often experienced shells exploding near me, disturbing me while hunting. On one occasion [at 0120 hours on 11 July] I received a severe hit and I was only able to save myself by bailing out.'

Success was limited although Hauptmann 'Nasen' Müller took his score to 23 kills with four Abschüsse while in command of I./NJGr10. Born on 4 December 1912 he first received flying training in 1934 and joined the German airline Deutsche Lufthansa. At the beginning of World War II, Müller

was promoted to Feldwebel and assigned to 5./KG z.b.V. 172 as a transport pilot flying the Junkers Ju 52. After participating in the Polish campaign, in February 1940, Müller became an instructor at Blindflugschule 4 and promoted to Leutnant. He served with Blindflugschule 7 from September until December 1942, when he moved to I./KG50 as Technical Officer, the unit being equipped with the new Heinkel He 177 heavy bomber. In summer 1943 Müller joined 'Hajo' Herrmann as part of the latter's experimental 'Wilde Sau' single-engine night fighting unit Stab/Versuchskommando Herrmann. 'Hajo' Herrmann[80] considered Müller an ideal candidate for the role because of his blind flying instructing experience. On the night of 3/4 July he recorded his first 'Wilde Sau' victory, a Halifax near Cologne. On the night of 22 October Müller's fighter suffered engine failure and he was slightly injured after bailing out. In mid-August Müller was appointed Technical Officer of JG300. He claimed two Halifaxes on 11 August 1943 near Heidelberg. Two Lancasters were claimed near Swinemünde on 17 August and two Stirlings were claimed over Berlin on 24 August. Müller then claimed a Lancaster southeast of Munich on 7 September. By November Müller was Staffelkapitän of 1./JG300 and had 19 night victories. In January 1944 Müller was appointed Gruppenkommandeur of 1./NJGr10 and was charged with evaluating all aspects of technical and tactical experimentation.

Hauptmann Müller was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 27 July for 23 victories. He then became commander of I./NJG11) on 25 August. Müller continued to fly against the RAF night bomber streams, sometimes flying a personal Bf 109G-14 uniquely fitted with an oblique-mounted MG 151/20 cannon in a 'Schräge Musik' installation behind the cockpit. Müller claimed a Mosquito near Eindhoven on 23 August and a Lancaster over Frankfurt on 12 September. The Mosquito was B.XX KB242 on 608 Squadron at Downham Market flown by Flight Lieutenant S. D. Webb RCAF and Flying Officer John Campbell RAFVR. The badly damaged Mosquito crash landed at RAF Woodbridge at 0110 hours. The crew escaped unhurt. A double victory was claimed over Lancasters on 4 December 1944. By late 1944 and into 1945 Müller flew numerous night ground attack sorties against Allied rail targets and supply columns. His last known victories were both on 21 February 1945. Towards the end of the war, I./NJG11 received a few Me 262 jet fighters to experiment with in night interceptions. Müller would end the war as one of the leading single-seat night fighter aces with thirty night victories (and three unconfirmed) claimed in 52 sorties.

On the night of Tuesday 18/19 July over 850 bombers of the Main Force attacked Wesseling, Scholven/Buer, Acquet and rail targets in France and 22 Mosquitoes of the LNSF visited the 'Big City' once again. One of the Mosquito crews that were 'on' that night was Squadron Leader Terence Edgar 'Doddy' Dodwell RAFVR DFC* Dodwell and his navigator, Pilot Officer George W. Cash on 571 Squadron at Oakington. Dodwell was 29 years old. His wife Olive lived in Thorpe Bay, Essex. 'Doddy' had completed part of a Mosquito tour on 1409 Met Flight before joining 571 Squadron. Before this he had completed a tour with Squadron Leader Peter Ashley on 110 Squadron, flying Blenheim IVs. George Cash had been on ops for nearly a

year. He went into briefing he saw that 'A' Flight was going to the Ruhr and 'B' Flight to Berlin and so he began to get out the charts for the Ruhr. However he noticed that his name and that of Squadron Leader Terry 'Doddy' Dodwell his pilot were not on the 'A' flight list and when he told 'Doddy' he said he had swapped with another crew[81] and that they were going to Berlin instead! A momentary cold shiver went down his spine! One did not volunteer for anything unless you were mad or going 'hunting'. If in the line of duty, you were detailed for a hazardous mission that was one thing, but you did not 'stick your neck out' and ask for trouble. For the first time in fifty odd trips Cash had a premonition of doom. At dispersal Dodwell was checking the instruments and running up the engines when there was a magneto drop on the port engine and so they had to clamber out and send for the flight van to take them to the reserve aircraft, 'V for Victor' MM136. They settled in and after hurried checks took off after the others. As they crossed the enemy coast they began to siphon the fuel from the drop tanks and settled at their operational height of 28,000 feet. Cash continues:

'Near Arnhem, a sudden stream of tracer shot past us announcing the presence of a night fighter. Doddy took vigorous evasive action never easy with a bomb load and for a few hectic minutes that seemed like an age, we ran the gauntlet of what we thought were two Ju 88s. We felt a few thuds in the fuselage but there did not appear to be any serious damage. At this point Doddy realised that he was losing precious fuel into the slipstream. He had not stopped the siphoning pumps and the tanks were overflowing. I switched them off and neither of us knew how much fuel had been lost. Somehow I wasn't particularly worried. I knew deep down that we wouldn't be needing it anyway.

'At the turning point in our route which was to take us on a dog-leg to Stendal, the starting point for the bombing run we decided to fly straight there to make up for all the lost time. I worked out a course to steer and then began to window 'like mad'. Unfortunately the route took us over the flak at Wittingen, which immediately opened up on us. Suddenly we found ourselves in a box of heavy predicted flak with shells bursting all around. Shrapnel rattled down on to the cockpit of the aircraft and we could smell the cordite. 'Doddy' put the aircraft into a steep dive; a chunk of flak smashed through the fuselage and hit the 'Gee' set putting it out of action. The evasive action finally took us clear of the flak and on an ETA for Stendal we climbed back to 32,000 feet. On course for the 'Big City' about fifteen minutes flying time away we could see the TIs going down as the raid began. Over on one side, we could see aircraft coned in searchlights and receiving a warm welcome from the defences. We had hardly settled on our approach when we too, found ourselves coned. We were blinded by the brilliance of the beams. More evasive action was taken but the searchlights hung on. 'Doddy' began to climb rapidly and just as I was beginning to wonder if we would ever get clear, the beams moved away. Strangely there had been no flak, but such was our relief, that we relaxed our vigilance - we ought to have known better!

'The TIs were now dead ahead and nose down, gathering speed we were

going in. I wrote in my log '0200 hours target sighted. Preparing to bomb.' I undid my seat belt and knelt down to go into the nose of the aircraft. Suddenly there was a thump, thump and a tremendous crump. As I straightened up again I could see that the port engine and wing was a mass of flames. I sat back on my seat and pulled up the flap to the escape hatch and it was then that I realised that I was alone in the aircraft. 'Doddy' had gone out of the top escape hatch. Flames were licking around the side of the cockpit and the aircraft began to go down in a spin. I was pressed into my seat by the 'g' forces and I did what many in similar circumstances must have done - I prayed, 'God help me.' 'The spiralling stopped for some unknown reason; my mind was cool and clear despite the heat in the cockpit. Reaching behind my seat I pulled my parachute towards me, knocking my elbow on the damaged 'Gee' set in the process. The parachute dropped into the escape hatch but fortunately it stuck halfway and I was able to retrieve it and clip it on. At this point I suddenly recalled an escape by a navigator described in the Tee-Em magazine and so, instead of going through the navigator's escape hatch I climbed out of the cockpit and rolled on to the starboard wing before being swept away by the slipstream. After three seconds I pulled the release handle on the chute but it did not open so I reached up and pulled the flaps open. There was a clop, a slight jerk and I was floating down with a beautiful white canopy above me. Looking down, I saw the aircraft crash into a field in a blaze. The 'Cookie' had not exploded and I thought for a moment what would happen if I drifted down near to the aircraft and it blew up but I drifted away from the scene. All of a sudden I found myself hanging from a tree in the darkness. I pressed the release button on the harness and fell about ten feet into some bushes, which broke my fall. All I had were a few minor scratches and I was firmly on 'terra firma.'[82]

'When a fellow named Barry Blunt was researching the history of 571 Squadron I learned from him what had happened on that disastrous trip. Apparently, we had been tracked and shot down by a German night fighter ace - Oberleutnant Heinz Strüning of 3/NJG flying a Heinkel 219A-5 'Uhu' ('Owl') which was armed with 'Schräge Musik'. To enable them to keep up with faster aircraft, their engines were fitted with nitrous-oxide boosters (as ours were) which could be used for about ten minutes or so to enhance their speed. Heinz Strüning was awarded the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds on 20 July 1944 for shooting us down![83] From an account in the German archives, the body of Squadron Leader Dodwell had been discovered, with his parachute unopened, in a clump of trees near Laudin, thirty-five miles west of Berlin, close to the site where the aircraft had crashed. From the appearance of the body, it had been deduced that he was dead before reaching the ground having been fatally injured by striking part of the aircraft (the tail?) on bailing out; hence the unopened parachute.'

The deterioration of Nachtjagd after the Allied invasion of France was caused by various factors. 'Long Window' made its appearance on the invasion front and 'SN-2', previously unsusceptible to 'Window' was now effectively jammed. These innovations were developed as a result of a stroke of luck on Thursday 13 July when a mystery aircraft landed at RAF

Woodbridge in Suffolk. Pilot Officer W. D. Raymond reported: 'It was shortly after sunrise, at about 04:30; the mist still lay over the airfield when the sound of engines announced the approach of an aircraft from the North Sea coast about ten miles away. The aircraft circled several times over the airfield. I took it for one of the Mosquitoes which were forever getting lost and straying overhead after returning from their operations in Europe, so I drew my flare gun and fired green flares to signal permission for it to land. The aircraft seemed to have been waiting fór this because it set down immediately and taxied over the runway through the swathes of mist. When I heard the engines switch off, I climbed into the big vehicle we always used to fetch in the crews and drove toward the machine, whose dark silhouette stood out in the fog. The first thing that puzzled me was that I saw three crew members coming toward me, whereas a Mosquito has only two men on board. I drove nearer and there were really and truly three German airmen standing before me, no less surprised than I. I drew my pistol and they surrendered without resistance. I made them give me their weapons and ordered them to walk to the airfield building while I slowly drove along beside them.

'The aircraft I had taken for a Mosquito in the morning fog, turned out to be the newest type of German night fighter, a Ju 88G-1, which had become operational only two months earlier and was equipped with every imaginable kind of radio and airborne radar equipment, all completely unfamiliar to us. The aircraft, whose fuselage bore the number 4R+UR, belonged to 7./NJG2 and had been assigned to patrol the North Sea. The young crew, who appeared dumbfounded, said that they had only just completed 100 hours of flight training and had flown by compass heading, but by mistake had proceeded in exactly the wrong direction and thought that they were over their own airfield. The lads had been lucky, because when our ground personnel tried to take a petrol sample for testing purposes, there was no fuel left in the tank. I immediately notified my superior officer in nearby Ipswich and a couple of hours later a plane landed at Woodbridge field carrying Wing Commander Jackson, Professor Jones and other specialists.'

Obergefreiter Hans Mäckle and his inexperienced night fighter crew of Obergefreiters Heinz Olze and Hans Mockle had taken off from Twente at 2305 and had become lost in thick cloud, which had a ceiling of about 14,000 feet (4500 metres). For forty-five minutes, the bordfunker tried to establish radio contact but without success. After four hours in the air and very low on fuel, Mäckle told his crew they might have to bail out. However, the bordmeckaniker informed him that he had not packed his parachute. Mäckle decided to get the Ju 88 down. He wrote:

'Fuel gauges showing empty and descending at six feet [1.8 metres] per second, we broke through the clouds at 600 feet [180 metres] and miraculously discovered we were coming down right on top of an airfield. I did not waste any time landing the aircraft. When I saw the big white flashing light on the control tower and all the four-engined airplanes, I had no doubts where we were. After we touched down, the plane rolled to a complete stop in the middle of the runway with both engines dead. While

bright spotlights aimed at our plane, we sat there for twenty minutes or longer before we were finally approached by an armoured vehicle and thus had plenty of time to burn classified material and demolish valuable instruments. We were happy to be alive and well, especially the flight engineer.'

On the afternoon of that same day the Ju 88 was taken to Farnborough where next day Wing Commander Jackson began tests on the aircraft and its equipment. The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) had learned from captured Luftwaffe airmen that in addition to Lichtenstein 'SN-2' wide-angle radar, the German night fighters also carried other new airborne radars; but as yet no details were known. Thus until capture of the Ju 88 Bomber Command had no suspicion that their 'Monica' tail-mounted warning device, whose bleeps were meant to warn RAF crews of the approach of German night fighters, had an unintentional side-effect: FuG 227/1 'Flensburg' was able to pick up emissions from 'Monica', so the British device had been leading the night fighters straight to the RAF bombers ever since it was incorporated into the bombers at the start of 1943. Another German radar, FuG 350Z 'Naxos' allowed the night fighters to detect the impulses of the H_2S blind-bombing device and to locate the bomber streams from a distance of ninety miles.

When Wing Commander Jackson had made his test flights, arrived at these discoveries and reported them to Bomber Command, the horrified Air Chief Marshal Harris ordered all the 'Monica' warning devices removed from the tails of the Lancasters and Halifaxes immediately. The crews were even ordered to use their basic identification signals only in real emergencies and the H_2S radar equipment was to be switched on only after the bombers were already within range of the German ground radar systems. But Jackson's most important discovery was that Lichtenstein 'SN-2' worked on a frequency of 85 megahertz. So, the unexpected landing of a Ju 88G-l at Woodbridge took from the German night fighters their last hope of defending themselves successfully against British night raids. Within ten days British scientists had developed 'long' 'Window' for jamming the 'SN-2' radar (which previously was unsusceptible to 'Window'). 'Naxos' was virtually rendered useless. Thus, virtually all the tools which the 'Tame Boars' had used to their advantage during late 1943-early 1944 were gone at a stroke. It was a decisive blow from which the arm would never recover.

On the night of 20/21 July thirty Lancasters and seven Halifaxes failed to return from Main Force raids. A further 87 heavies bombed V-weapon sites at Ardouval and Wizernes and 302 Lancasters and fifteen Mosquitoes bombed rail targets at Courtrai. Another 153 heavies and 13 Mosquitoes attacked the synthetic oil refinery at Bottrop while 147 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes attacked an oil plant at Homberg. Some 106 aircraft from training units made a diversionary sweep over the North Sea while Lancasters and Mosquitoes made a spoof raid to Alost. More Mosquitoes raided Hamburg and RCM aircraft and Stirlings made other sorties to further stretch the resources of the Nachtjagd. Nine Lancasters were lost on the Courtrai raid (two of which were destroyed on their way back by Oberstleutnant Helmut

Lent, Kommodore of NJG3, within sight of the British coast off Dover for his 106th and 107th victories). Thirty-one Lancasters and seven Halifaxes failed to return from the Bottrop/Homberg raid. Nachtjagd shot down an estimated fifteen aircraft from the Bottrop/Homberg force. 75 Squadron RNZAF at Mepal lost seven of its 25 aircraft. II./NJG1 destroyed three Viermots (two by Unteroffizier Gustav Sarzio and Lancaster III NE164 on 550 Squadron, which crashed at Ottrott near Strassburg by Oberleutnant Gottfried Hanneck, Staffelkapitän, 6./NJG1. Unteroffizier Kurt Boldt of 8./NJ2 shot down Lancaster III LL779 on 101 Squadron ten kilometres east of Gemert at a height of 4500 metres at 0150 hours. Flying Officer Jack Arthur Harvey RCAF and his crew were killed in the attack. Boldt's Ju 88G-1 was hit by debris when the Lancaster exploded and the Junkers also crashed at Germet. Boldt survived but his bordfunker was killed. On 11/12 November 1944 Unteroffizier Boldt was killed after a combat in a crash twelve kilometres west of Arnsberg.

The night of 20/21 July was a famous night for 169 Squadron, which destroyed '100 Group's 100th Hun' during a hat trick of victories by three crews. Pilot Officer Harry 'Shorty' Reed and Flying Officer Stuart Watts got a Ju 88 in the Homberg area while Flight Lieutenant J. S. Fifield and Flying Officer F. Staziker claimed a Bf 110 at Courtrai. The CO, Wing Commander Neil Bromley OBE DFC and his navigator Flight Lieutenant Philip Truscott DFC destroyed Bf 110G-4 G9+EZ, which crashed near Mol in Belgium. The pilot was 25-year old Oberfeldwebel Karl-Heinz Scherfling of 12./NJG1, who was a Ritterkreuzträger since 8 April 1944 and he had 33 to 35 night victories. Born on 6 September 1918 at Gelsenkirchen in Ruhrgebiet, Scherfling had been was posted to 7./NJG1 at the end of 1940. He recorded his first victory on the night of 31 March/1 April 1941 when he shot down a Wellington near Groningen. On the night of 9/10 April, he recorded his second and the Nachtjagd's first, victory over a Viermot, when he shot down a Stirling near Lingen. It was the third time in six weeks that Scherfling had been shot down but this time he failed to bail out. Feldwebel Herbert Winkler, the 31-year old bordschütze was killed also and Feldwebel Herbert Scholz the 25-year-old radar operator bailed out seriously injured. (Bromley and Truscott were killed on the night of 6/7 September when their Mosquito was hit by flak near Oldenburg while they were providing Bomber' Support for Mosquitoes bombing Hamburg).

The crack team of Hauptmann Martin Drewes, Feldwebel Erich Handke, bordfunker and Oberfeldwebel Georg 'Schorsch' Petz, air gunner of Stab III./NJG1 were one of the night-fighter crews that were sent up to meet the bombers (in Bf 110G-4 G9+MD). They destroyed a Halifax and a Lancaster, which must have been hit in the bomb-load because the 'Lanki' disintegrated 'into a thousand pieces' with white flames and a thousand green stars all around. The Bf 110 crew thought that the Lancaster must have been a Path Finder but there was no time to ponder as their fighter was struck several times by the debris and we went down steeply out of control. Handke, 'Schorsch' Petz and Drewes bailed out safely before the Bf 110 crashed near the Dutch-German border. Drewes' first victim was Halifax MZ511 LK-M on

578 Squadron, a veteran of 32 sorties, which had left Burn at 2305 for a raid on Bottrop. Although the crew was warned of a possible night fighter attack when a blip appeared on the 'Monica' set, Drewes' attack came as a complete surprise. Flight Lieutenant Alastair Tennant Hope-Robertson gave the bail-out signal 'J' over the visual intercom. Flying Officer Kenneth Parsons, bomb-aimer and Pilot Officer Jack Smith, navigator, were probably thrown clear when the Halifax exploded and they landed unconscious beneath opened parachutes. At 0130 MZ511 crashed near Heerde where Hope-Robertson and four of his crew were later laid to rest. 578 Squadron lost four aircraft all told. Two more collided in thick cloud of their return.

Drewes' second victim was Lancaster PB 174 LQ-P on 405 'Vancouver' Squadron RCAF, a PFF unit. Flight Lieutenant James Denholme Virtue RCAF (28) Toronto, Ontario and six crew were killed when their aircraft exploded. They were laid to rest in the Roman Catholic Cemetery of Tubbergen on 24 July. The Dutch Resistance hid sole survivor Flight Sergeant M. S. Stoyko RCAF, rear gunner.

Handke, Drewes and Petz were picked up in a car by Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt, who had also scored two Abschüsse - Lancasters: HK569 on 75 Squadron at Kessel near Venlo and LL859 on 622 Squadron that crashed at Dongen, thirty kilometres northwest of Volkel - and driven to the nearest hospital. 'Schorsch', who had a bomb splinter in the left forearm and a flesh wound in the right, had his arms put into plaster casts. Drewes had released his harness straps and he was catapulted out through the cockpit roof which was torn off and left hanging around his neck. He had only managed to lose it with some difficulty and had dislocated his arm in the process but at a farmhouse shortly after landing it had snapped into place again when he leaned on a table. Drewes and his wife Putzer, 'Schorsch' and his wife and Handke were sent to a convalescent home for four and a half weeks. (On 23/24 July, the night they left, Mosquitoes shot down three more crews of their Gruppe).

At 0147 hours near Leeuwarden airfield during landing Flight Lieutenant A. C. Musgrove and Flying Officer G. Egerton-Hine on 29 Squadron in NF.XIII claimed Bf 110G-4 G9+OR of 7./NJG1 flown by Hauptmann Siegfried Jandrey the thirty-year old pilot. The Bf 110G-4 crashed at Rijperkerk north of the airfield killing Jandrey and 25-year old bordfunker Unteroffizier Johann Stahl. Unteroffizier Anton Herger the 24-year old bordschütze was injured. Flying Officer N. Veale and Flying Officer R. D. Comyn on 239 Squadron in NF.II DZ661 also claimed a Bf 110 at Kiel. Bf 110G-4 G9+ER of 7./NJG1 flown by 25-year old Feldwebel Karl Heinrich Lahmann was claimed by Flight Lieutenant R. J. Dix and Flying Officer A. J. Salmon on 169 Squadron in FB.VI NS997/G at very low level around midnight and crashed near Balk in Friesland Province. Lahmann's 21-year old bordfunker died; Unteroffizier 'Willi' Huxsohl and 21-year old Unteroffizier Günther Bouda bailed out. Lahmann was killed on 3 March 1945 when he crashed due to engine failure. He had two combat victories. At 0125 hours the crew of Bf 110G-4 G9+GR of 7./NJG1 flown by Leutnant Josef Hettlich was shot down five kilometres north of Deelen airfield. Hettlich and Feldwebel Johann

Treiber, bordfunker who were both slightly injured and the bordschütze bailed out safely. Hettlich and the crew of his Ju 88G-6 crashed at Kockengen NNE of Woerden on 1 January 1945 during Unnternehmen (Operation) 'Gisela'.

Drewes still could not fly because of his arm. Whilst still recovering from his wounds, on 27 July. Hauptmann Martin Drewes received the Ritterkreuz for his 48 victories. He added one more kill to his total before the end of the war, on 3/4 March 1945. He was decorated with the Oak Leaves to his Ritterkreuz three weeks before the capitulation of Nazi Germany. Feldwebel Erich Handke's 58th and 59th Abschussbeteiligungen earned him the rare award for a bordfunker of the Ritterkreuz, which he and his pilot received from General Schmid, C-in-C of the Nachtjagd, on 27 July.

On 24/25 July 461 Lancasters and 153 Halifaxes were despatched to Stuttgart in the first of three heavy raids on the German city in five nights. Seventeen Lancasters and four Halifaxes were lost. Twin-engined Nachtjäger claimed seventeen kills. On 25/26 July when 412 Lancasters and 138 Halifaxes returned to Stuttgart and other large forces bombed Wanne-Eickel and flying bomb sites in France[84] two 2nd TAF and two 100 Group Mosquito Intruder crews were successful over the continent. Flight Lieutenant D. J. Griffiths and Flight Sergeant S. F Smith of 23 Squadron recorded the intruder Squadron's first air-to-air victory since returning from the Mediterranean, with a UEA at Laon Pouvron. Ex-Dam Buster, Squadron Leader Harold B. M. 'Mick' Martin DSO DFC and his navigator Flying Officer J. W. Smith on 515 Squadron in a Mosquito FB.VI shot down a Me 410 Hornisse ('Hornet') on a 'Night Ranger' to Stuttgart and Boblingen. They had arrived over the area shortly after midnight and stooged around 'for as long as possible' but the patrol was uneventful and Martin headed home. Just after crossing the Belgian coast at Knokke at 0350 hours in very hazy conditions, an aircraft was seen about one mile to port flying very fast. Martin swung the Mosquito around to dead astern and below the illuminated aircraft at a height of about 3,000 feet. He closed to fifty yards and identified it as a Me 410. Martin gave the starboard engine a short second burst of cannon fire from astern and slightly below at seventy yards (so close that the 410's tail light literally blotted out the spot on Martin's ring sight). The Hornisse pilot dived to port but an almost simultaneous short second burst of cannon, directed on the port wing, blew the wing off and the Hornisse went down in a screaming dive and in flames. It was seen to crash on the sea and continued burning.

On 26/27 July 178 Lancasters and nine Mosquitoes attacked rail yards at Givors for the loss of four Lancasters and two Mosquitoes. Two of the Lancasters were claimed by Leutnant Otto Huchler of 2./NJG2 for his first and last victories. He claimed his first 'lanki' at Haren-Lathen at 0015. Thirty minutes later, ten kilometres south of Ste-Loup (Rhône) he was killed by return fire from Lancaster III LM484 PG-H on 619 Squadron which he had just set on fire. Twenty-year old Flying Officer Ronald George Turvey RAAF, son of George Albert and Amelia Helen Turvey, of Marrickville, New South Wales, and his crew were killed. A Mosquito B.IV on 627 Squadron, one of the thirty in the LNSF that went to Hamburg, crashed at Letra (Rhône) was

the loss of the crew. Twenty-three Mosquito night-fighter patrols were flown and 26-year old Squadron Leader Richard Stanley 'Stan' Jephson and Flying Officer Murray Roberts on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF of 2nd TAF destroyed a Ju 88 over Caen but their NF.XIII was brought down by the flying debris and both men were killed in the crash. The only other Mosquito claim was a Ju 188 at Melun by Flying Officer Frank E. Pringle and Flying Officer Wain Eaton on 29 Squadron.

On Friday 28th/Saturday 29th July, when 494 Lancasters attacked Stuttgart again, 141 Squadron destroyed three aircraft. Flight Lieutenant Harry E. White DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Michael S. Allen DFC* got two Ju 88s in the Metz-Neufchateau area. In the same area, Pilot Officers Doug Gregory and D. H. Stephens destroyed their second Ju 88 of the month. Doug Gregory recalled: 'We took off from West Raynham at 2315 hours, set course for enemy coast, crossing in at Overflakkee at 16,000 feet at 2357 hours. Route uneventful until leaving 'Ida' on way to 'Christa'. At 0031 hours at 16,000 feet we got an AI contact slightly port and below crossing port to starboard. We turned in behind him and went down. A/C then led us on a vector of 210°M. We closed and after an eight-minute chase obtained visual. Closing still further we got into various positions and finally when about 200 feet directly below, identified A/C as a Ju 88. He was flying quite straight at 14,000 feet without a clue. We pulled up to his level and at approximately 100 yards and let fly with a 1½ second burst. Our shells apparently found their mark for his port engine immediately gave up the ghost and burst into flames and smoking pieces came back at us. We broke off to port and watched him burning satisfactorily and going down. He entered cloud at 8,000 feet and after a few seconds he lit up the cloud as he exploded on the ground. Time was now 0045 hours and his grave may be found sixteen miles NW of Metz. We then set course for base via Overflakkee, crossing out at 0140 hours. Here endeth the second lesson.'

Ju 88G-1 R4+KT of 9./NJG2 crashed twenty kilometres SSW of Toul, France. Hauptmann August Speckmann, Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm Berg, bordmechaniker and Unteroffizier Otto Brüggenkamp, bordschütze were killed. Oberfeldwebel Arthur Boos, bordfunker was wounded.

Nachtjagd units intercepted the stream on the outward flight and aided by the bright moonlight, 39 Lancasters were shot down. Six crews of II./NJG1, operating from Echterdingen, were credited with eight of the Stuttgart raiders. Another force of 187 Halifaxes, 106 Lancasters and fourteen Mosquitoes raided Hamburg but again 'Tame Boars' were directed to the bomber stream on the bombers' homeward flight. Eighteen Halifaxes and four Lancasters were downed, eight of which were credited to III./NJG1. Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt, Staffelkapitän, 8./NJG1 claimed three Viermots and Leutnant Rolf Ebhardt three Canadian-crewed Halifaxes. Ebhardt's first two victims were MZ816 on 433 'Porcupine' Squadron RCAF flown by Flying Officer John Keith Armstrong RCAF which crashed at Prinzenmoor at 0123 hours with the loss of the skipper and three crew and NP716 on 408 'Goose' Squadron flown by Squadron Leader Gerald Bennett Latimer RCAF just six minutes later in the vicinity of Heide with the loss of

all the crew. His third Halifax (possibly MZ859 on 431 'Iroquois' Squadron RCAF flown by Pilot Officer George Robert Baumann RCAF) disappeared into the North Sea 25 kilometres east of Heligoland at 0137 hours. One of the gunners was the only survivor.

'After the Stuttgart operations' recalls Flight Sergeant Louis Patrick Wooldridge DFC '578 Squadron reverted to tactical targets, assisting the Army against the German Wehrmacht and operations against the 'V bomb weapon sites. In consequence, operations, both by day and by night, were carried out against such place names as Thiverny, Bois de Cassan, near Paris, Fôret de Nieppe, Fôret de Mormal and Hazebrouck.' In all, 1,114 aircraft - 601 Lancasters, 492 Halifaxes and 21 Mosquitoes - made bombing attacks on these targets and Trossy-Ste-Maxim flying bomb stores in northern France. Six Lancasters were lost on the raid on Trossy-Ste-Maxim and one from the Bois de Cassan raid on 3 August. Louis Wooldridge witnessed its loss.

'Flying at about 16,000 feet; 1,000 feet below our height and about 1,000 yards astern of our aircraft, it received a direct hit from an anti aircraft shell and blew up. The aircraft and its bomb load erupted in a huge pall of dense black smoke centred by bright reddish orange flames.

Several minutes later, when the dense black smoke began to disperse and thin out, a vacant space could be observed where the Lancaster had been.

'About the first week of August the squadron was informed that a decision had been made to commence a 'Round the Clock' bombing campaign against Berlin. Instead of returning to our bases in Britain after bombing Berlin, we were to continue our operational flight eastwards, to land at pre-arranged bases in Russia, where the Lancaster and Halifax bombers would be refuelled, bombed up and re-armed for the return flight. Meanwhile during the day period, the US 8th Air Force would commence their operational day flights to Berlin and Russia, to land at the Russian bases vacated by the RAF air crews on their return flight to Berlin and Britain. 'Arrangements were made by RAF Bomber Command, the US 8th Force and the Russians but after a few false starts, the operation was scrubbed. Annoyed, we questioned the reason for this. Apparently, Stalin himself had cancelled the operation because of supposed difficulties of aircraft recognition between unfamiliar British and American bomber aircraft by Russian aircraft. It is possible that if Stalin had agreed to the original operation code-named 'Thunderclap', upon Berlin in August 1944, Dresden might possibly have escaped destruction later in the war, 13/14 February 1945.'

Endnotes Chapter 6

76 Flying Officer William Wright Provan, another 29 Squadron pilot.
77 In 1938 Bob Stainton had been a brilliant captain of the Sussex cricket team.
78 George Allison was killed on 22 July on the squadron's first 'Day Ranger'. His navigator Sub Lieutenant (A) C. W. Porter FAA also died.
79 Peters died on 12 November 1999.
80 Herrmann was captured by the Soviets after the war and was held prisoner for ten years before returning to Germany in 1955. Back in Germany, he studied law and settled in Düsseldorf. Among others, he defended Otto Ernst Remer, David Irving and Fred A. Leuchter. In 1959 Herrmann married the German soprano Ingeborg Reichelt. The marriage produced two children. Herrmann celebrated his 95th birthday in 2008 and continued making public appearances. A former Luftwaffe colonel, Herrmann was one of the highest-ranked surviving German Luftwaffe officers. He died on 5 November 2010.
81 Flight Lieutenant D. L. S. Thompson (PoW) and Flight Lieutenant John Philip Sargent 'Jack' Calder RCAF (KIA).
82 MM136 crashed near Laudin, 35 miles W of Berlin. The Germans buried him in the small cemetery at Laudin and later removed and reburied him in the cemetery at Heerstrasse in Berlin. Unteroffizier Wittmann of I./NJG10 claimed a Mosquito at Gardelegen-Berlin at about the same time as Strüning. It could be that both claims were for the same Mosquito, as only one FTR from the Berlin raid and no others were lost this night.
83 Heinz Strüning BX.VI was also credited with shooting down Mosquito BX.VI ML984, crewed by Flight Lieutenant Thompson and Calder (KIA) over Hamburg on 20 July during a LNSF raid on Hamburg by 26 Mosquitoes. Flight Lieutenant Thompson bailed out but Jack Calder was killed.
84 8 Lancasters and 4 Halifaxes were lost on the Stuttgart raid and 1 Mosquito Intruder FTR. 11 of these including the 141 Squadron Mosquito (Flight Lieutenant A. J. Smitz (PoW) and Flying Officer Joseph John Bambury (KIA) who were shot down W of the Rhine WSW of Ludwigshafen, were claimed destroyed by the Nachtjagd.

Chapter 7
Round The Clock

Night after night we sat at readiness in our machines and then when the first bombs fell on our brightly lit airfield and fast British bombers strafed our installations with cannon and machine-guns, we knew that in Germany there was now no safe rear line position. With round the clock bombing by the Allied bomber streams, the Reich itself had become a gigantic battlefield. According to a predetermined plan of attack Berlin was sinking into dust and ashes. On their nightly forays the Allies no longer needed to search for the capital, for the huge fires of the previous night were still blazing and lighting up the darkness. A blood-red glow lay over Berlin for weeks and months on end.

***Duel Under The Stars* by Wilhelm Johnen**

On the night of 29/30 July Flight Lieutenant George 'Jamie' Jameson DFC RNZAF and his navigator, Flying Officer A. Norman Crookes from Derbyshire, a successful Mosquito NF.XIII team on 488 Squadron RNZAF at Colerne near Bath, took off to patrol the Coutance-Ste-Lô area. Jameson's hunt for any German fighters in the vicinity was flown with zeal born of personal tragedy. The 23-year old New Zealander had been devastated to learn that both his brothers had been killed. His elder brother was serving with the New Zealand Army in Tunisia and his younger brother died in a Beaufighter during training at East Fortune. Tragically a cable from New Zealand informed Jamie that his father had died on hearing the news of the death of two of his sons. Jameson's mother immediately appealed to the New Zealand Government to allow Jamie to return home and take over the family farm of nearly 2,000 acres in Rotherham near Canterbury when he had been born on 20 November 1921. The High Commissioner, Mr. (later Sir William) Jordan, visited 488 Squadron and told Jamie that he had done more than his duty and that he should return to his mother. Jamie was persuaded to apply for a passage on the next ship repatriating time-expired New Zealanders and Australians via the USA and Panama. However, before Jameson departed he was determined to avenge the untimely deaths of his brothers.

When they saw against the dawn an unidentified aircraft approaching head-on at 5,000 feet Jameson recognized it as a Junkers 88. Flying Beaufighters on 125 Squadron in 1942-43 Jameson had already destroyed three enemy aircraft and damaged a Ju 88 over the British Isles and had claimed a Me 410 and a Ju 88 over France since joining the New Zealand Squadron and teaming up with Crookes. Jameson turned hard to port and

followed the Ju 88 through the cloud tops. As the Kiwi closed to 300 yards there was a series of explosions from the ground caused by the Junkers dropping his bombs on Allied troops below. He tried to get away but Jameson gave two short bursts as they entered the next clear patch and after a fire in the port engine and fuselage the Ju 88 went down through the clouds vertically and hit the ground not far from Caen. As Jameson circled the crash scene Crookes picked up another contact on his radarscope. A visual sighting was soon obtained of an aircraft flying just over the clouds at about 280 mph. Whilst closing on it, another Ju 88 suddenly appeared through the cloud about one mile ahead, flying in the same direction as the first aircraft. As Jameson drew closer the second Ju 88 seemed to see him and did a hard port turn, diving towards cloud cover. Jameson and Crookes followed on the turn and opened fire from dead astern at 350/400 yards range. A large fire started in the Ju 88's starboard engine and it disappeared vertically through clouds, well ablaze. Later, the kill was confirmed destroyed by a navigator on 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF who saw the Ju 88 hit the ground 5-6 miles S of Caen, explode and burst into flames.

Jameson and Crookes continued on patrol. Almost immediately Jamie obtained a brief visual on an aircraft crossing from port to starboard some 5,000 feet away and identified it as a Ju 88. Crookes confirmed this and took over on his 'box-of-tricks' keeping Jameson behind the enemy aircraft, which was now taking most violent evasive action and at the same time, was jamming their equipment. When they were down to almost tree-top height Jameson regained the visual at only 250 yards, opening fire immediately and causing the Junkers to pull up almost vertically, turning to port with sparks and debris falling away. The Ju 88 eventually stalled and nose-dived into a four-acre field near Lisieux where it exploded. As the time was now 0515 hours Jameson climbed to 5,000 feet and requested Control to vector him back to any activity, as he had already observed further anti-aircraft fire through the clouds ahead. Norman Crookes soon obtained two more contacts and Jamie decided to take the nearest, chasing this until a sighting was obtained at 4,000 feet range where it was identified as a Do 217. The Dornier pilot evidently spotted the Mosquito at the same time because he immediately began intensive evasive weaving and climbing before entering cloud where it straightened out just as Jameson opened fire at 300 yards. Strikes were seen on the Dornier's fuselage, which began to burn furiously as the enemy aircraft turned its nose up and to starboard with the rear-gunner opening fire but the gunner's dying burst missed and the aircraft dived into the ground with a terrific explosion. Jameson had fired 320 20mm shells to destroy all four aircraft in the space of just twenty minutes, a feat which took the New Zealander's score to nine enemy aircraft destroyed.

488 New Zealand Squadron RNZAF was one of six Mosquito squadrons in 85 (Base) Group, 2nd TAF that had been formed for the purpose of providing fighter cover over the continent leading up to and after D-Day. In July they downed 55 German aircraft and claimed two 'probables'. NF.XVIIs on 219 Squadron Fighter Command at Bradwell Bay also shot

down six Ju 88/188s in and around the beachhead. In August 77 enemy aircraft were destroyed in the air by Mosquito night-fighter and fighter-bomber squadrons of 2nd TAF. On 1/2 August 33-year old Canadian Squadron Leader James Dean 'Red' Somerville of Parry Sound, Ontario and Flying Officer G. D. Robinson of Transcona, Manitoba on 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF were on patrol in NF.XIII MM477/U equipped with AI.Mk.VIII radar. During the course of their patrol they intercepted a Ju 188 ten miles northeast of Tessy at 0100 hours. Somerville fired a short burst and the port wing of the Ju 188 disintegrated outward of the engine nacelle. It flicked over into a steep half spiral to starboard and dived vertically into the ground. A violent explosion followed. It was the Mosquito crew's second victory. The night following, 2/3 August, Somerville and Robinson scored their third victory when they shot down a Do 217 six miles northwest of Pontorson at 2255 hours.

The situation in the invasion area was becoming so desperate for the Germans that night-fighter units like NJG4 were now ordered to make low-level attacks on Allied positions. Hans Autenrieth, who in February 1944 had been promoted Hauptmann and appointed Staffelkapitän of 6./NJG4 was one who described this type of operation as pointless. His aircraft were neither bombers nor fighter-bombers and his night fighter crews were only trained and equipped for air combat. Hauptmann Autenrieth had scored five Abschüsse in the early summer of 1944 to take his score to 22. On the night of 2/3 August whilst on low level sortie in the area of Avranches his Ju 88G-1 had received several hits from US anti-aircraft and having lost an engine he had to make an emergency landing at Coulommiers. At around 2230 hours on 3 August Autenrieth took off from the base on a night-fighting patrol in the area of Brest as the German night fighter control was expecting the landing of American or British paratroops or other airborne forces in the area. With him in Ju 88G-1 3C+KP was his bordfunker Feldwebel Rudolf 'Rudi' Adam and gunner Unteroffizier Georg 'Schorsch' Helbig. In over three years of flying together this Nachtjagd team had destroyed 23 British night bombers in air combat. Autenrieth headed towards the Brest area accompanied by six other Ju 88s of his Staffel but this was abandoned and he headed for Avranches. Suddenly they were fired on by flak from the American occupied area and a 'loud bang' indicated that they had received a hit in the fuselage. As Autenrieth tried to avoid further hits by twisting about and checked the instruments in the cockpit, suddenly 'Rudi' Adam shouted, 'Aircraft behind!' At the same instant they were fired upon by a Mosquito night-fighter who hit the port engine and wing of the Junkers, which immediately caught fire. Autenrieth ordered his crew to bail out and he kept the aircraft level long enough for Adam and then Helbig to get out before the Ju 88 crashed at Fougeres northeast of Rennes at 0130.

Autenrieth sprained his left ankle on landing and limped to a farmhouse where the French occupants told him that the area he had parachuted into had been taken by the Americans two days earlier and he was advised to surrender to them. Autenrieth refused and was at large for two days before he was found by French partisans on the third day. They interrogated him

and took him to a forest nearby where they clearly intended to shoot him. He was only saved when an American truck appeared and he was handed over to the US troops. No trace was ever found of Feldwebel 'Rudi' Adam, who may have been shot out of hand by French partisans. Unteroffizier Georg Helbig was soon taken prisoner by Allied troops.[85] Claims for four Ju 88s were made by Mosquito crews who shot down fourteen German aircraft altogether on the night of 3/4 August. Ju 88G-1 3C+KP may have been shot down by Flight Lieutenant 'Jamie' Jameson DFC RNZAF and Flying Officer A. Norman Crookes on 488 Squadron RNZAF in Mosquito NF.XIII MM466. Jameson's tenth victory was a Ju 88 (he also claimed a 2nd Ju 88 which was not confirmed), which was about to dive-bomb British Army troops near Ste-Lô and it was brought down by a burst of just sixty 20mm cannon shells. Next day came news of Jameson's sailing date for New Zealand.

Shortly before noon on 6 August every German fighter unit in the Paris area including 26 Third Gruppe Bf 109s of JG26 was scrambled to intercept a formation of heavy bombers. Word was that these were American and they were reported to have little or no escort. In fact over 220 aircraft that set out to attack the flying bomb supply sites at Bois de Cassan and Forêt de Nieppe once more were RAF Halifaxes and Lancasters. Bombing was scattered and was no more successful at Hazebrouck where just over sixty aircraft, mostly Halifaxes, attempted to bomb the railway centre. Four Lancasters failed to return from the operation on Bois de Cassan. One Halifax and its crew on 51 Squadron at Snaith were lost on the raid on Hazebrouck. I/JG1 arrived at the bomber stream first, but were driven off by a single squadron of Spitfires. III/JG26 and III/JG54 next hit separate parts of the formation and used up all their ammunition on the bombers without seeing an Allied fighter. III/JG1 was last on the scene and were prevented from making a decisive attack on the cripples by the Spitfires of 332 (Norwegian) Squadron, which shot down the two 109s providing high cover for the Gruppe and then dived on the main German formation, dispersing it. Third Gruppe pilots claimed four Halifaxes and three Lancasters. Unteroffizier Heinz Gehrke's element leader, Feldwebel Karl Laub, picked out a straggling and damaged Lancaster at 10,000 feet. The tail gunner was slumped over, dead in his wrecked turret and Gehrke and Laub were able to attack from the rear, entirely unmolested. The bomber crew could only retaliate by throwing out bundles of 'Window' but Gehrke hit the left outboard engine and the Lancaster dived away, smoking. As the bomber had previously been damaged, Gehrke was not awarded a full victory credit, but rather one for a 'final destruction' but it was added to his victory total. His story matches that of the surviving crew of a 207 Squadron aircraft in most details; this Lancaster was one which reached England and was then scrapped.[86]

On 6 August 604 'County of Middlesex' Squadron became the first England-based Mosquito fighter squadron to move to France when it transferred to A.8 at Picauville on the Cherbourg Peninsula because someone, quite wrongly, had convinced the planners that the US night fighters were inadequate. On the night of 5/6 August Flight Lieutenant John

Arthur Munro Haddon and Flying Officer Ralph J. McIlvenny took off on a night patrol in NF.XIII MM514. When Haddon saw a tiny speck ahead in the sky at a distance of 3,500 feet his navigator, who was using night glasses, voiced the opinion that it could be a Ju 88. Pilots seldom believed that navigators could tell a Lancaster from a Lysander but Mac was much above average and Haddon decided discretion was the better part of valour. He slid well to one side and below so that they were not silhouetted against the moon as they had been. It also gave them a chance to see the aircraft from the best angle. As Haddon closed it was clear that the target was a 188 and he did not know the Mosquito crew was there. Haddon closed to 800 feet, checked for the tenth time that his guns were set to fire, that the props were in near fine pitch and that the gunsight was dim enough to see through. Then he pulled up behind and opened fire hitting the Ju 88's port engine, then the fuselage. Something left the aircraft which was on fire on the way down and the Mosquito crew ducked. The Ju 188's pyrotechnics exploded and it finally went in near Domfront in the area of Rennes.

Before they had time for the usual mutual admiration to begin Haddon and McIlvenny got a call to turn southeast again because there was more 'trade' at 25 miles and below. Haddon put the nose hard down and eventually McIlvenny got a number of contacts. Haddon ended up overshooting one of them and it was clear that this was no sitting duck. He knew the Mosquito crew was there and what he had to do about it. After several visuals on an 88 that was all over the sky, doing steep turns, climbing and diving, Haddon finally managed to hold him visually and fly as in a day combat. He and Mac had developed a drill for such circumstances and the navigator called height and airspeed to Haddon every few seconds so that they would not fly into the ground. As he tried to turn inside the 88 to get his gun-sight on him Haddon found him flying in a very tight turn, much too low for comfort. Suddenly the Ju 88 went on his back and dived, perhaps having stalled. Shortly afterwards there was a great flash from the ground and Operations and Mac lost contact. Later the French Underground confirmed time and place near Antrain where it had gone in.

On Sunday 6 August Flight Lieutenant 'Jamie' Jameson and Flying Officer Norman Crookes on 488 Squadron took off on their last sortie together in 'R-Robert'. The controller informed them that 'Bandits' were making for the front-line. Jameson gave a 'Tallyho' (enemy sighted) over his R/T and he claimed a Ju 88 damaged five miles west of the Vire before notching his 11th victory, a Ju 88 fifteen miles east of Avranches. 'R for Robert' landed back at Colerne to a rapturous welcome.[87] Wing Commander 'Red' Somerville and Flying Officer G. D. Robinson on 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF also returned successfully to Colerne after a patrol south of Ste-Malo in NF.XIII MM566/R. At Ste-Hilaire Robinson picked up a contact on his AI.Mk.VIII at two miles range, 30-35° above at 12 o'clock. It was a Ju 88 being flown by Oberleutnant Siegfried Elsässer of Stab II/NJG2 who had two victories. The Mosquito was at 4,000 feet and Somerville's starboard engine was missing badly but he managed to climb to about 5,500 feet where a visual was obtained about 1,000 feet above, dead ahead. Flak was starting

to explode ahead and this seemed to frighten Elsässer, as he made a turn to port and started to let down slowly. This suited Somerville because the starboard engine was giving considerable difficulty. When he saw Elsässer start to turn Somerville cut across the inside of his turn and pulled in to about 900 feet, slightly below, where he recognized him as a Ju 88. The Canadian closed in, pulled up and opened fire at 700 feet. A few strikes were seen on the starboard engine, which caught fire, before the Ju 88 did a wide sweeping spiral to port from 3,000 feet and struck the ground with an extremely violent explosion, scattering debris over a large area. Elsässer had already bailed out and he was taken prisoner. It was Somerville's fourth victory. That night, 6/7 August, the Mosquitoes of 2nd TAF claimed nine enemy aircraft over France and a Mosquito XIII on the FIU flown by Lieutenant Peter Twiss RN and Flying Officer R. J. Lake AFC destroyed a Ju 88 at Melun-Bretigny.

Oberleutnant Heinz Rökker, who had been appointed Staffelkapitän of 2./NJG2 on 1 April, claimed three Lancasters north-east of Le Havre for his 39-41st Abschüsse. Hauptmann Helmut Bergmann, a Ritterkreuzträger and Staffelkapitän of 8./NJG4 with 36 night-Abschüsse in 135 combat sorties failed to return from a sortie in the Invasion Front area of Avranches-Mortain on the Cotentin Peninsula. No trace was ever found of his Bf 110G-4, or Feldwebel Günther Hauthal and Feldwebel 'Willi' Schopp. They were probably shot down by Flight Lieutenant John Clark Surman and his radar operator, Pilot Officer Clarence E. Weston, on 604 Squadron in Mosquito NF.XIII MM449/B. They also claimed two Do 217s to take their total score to five destroyed and one damaged. But a Grenadier of the Waffen SS 1 Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Panzer division who were launching Unnternehmen 'Lüttich' ('Liège'), the counter-attack at Mortain, may have been responsible. Both Surman and the Panzer division claimed a twin engined fighter at about the same time and place. Surman had joined the RAF in 1940 and had been an instructor before returning to operations in 1943. He and Weston were awarded DFCs in October that year. Only in 1956, Bergmann's badly burnt remains, which had been recovered from a crash site near Ste-James in mid-August 1944, were formally identified. Since then, the Nachtjagd 'Experte' rests in the large German military cemetery of Marigny, Manche.

The night of 6/7 August the Main Force was grounded but Mosquitoes were on patrol over the Reich. Mosquito B.XX KB118 on 139 Squadron flown by Flying Officers Bobby Elliott Hooke (PoW) and 24-year old John Stevenson (KIA) failed to return from a raid by forty Mosquitoes on Castrop-Rauxel. NF.XIII MM621 on 604 Squadron was lost in an engagement with a Me 410 over France and was also hit by flak. Flight Lieutenant J. C. Cooper DFC and 30-year old Flying Officer Sidney Charles Hubbard DFM were killed. Hubbard left a widow, Phyllis Hilda Hubbard, of Sidcup, Kent, Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm 'Willi' Glitz a Bf 110 pilot of Stab NJG2 claimed a Mosquito at 2340 hours. He was killed in 1944 having been credited with ten victories.

On the night of Monday 7/Tuesday 8 August 2nd TAF Mosquito crews

scored another three victories as 170 Lancasters and ten Mosquitoes attacked oil depots and storage facilities at Aire-sur-Lys and the Fôret de Lucheux in France for one Lancaster lost. 'Tame Boar' Nachtjagd claimed two Lancasters and a '4-mot' destroyed. Two of these could be Halifaxes (probably) which were lost on Resistance operations. Six enemy aircraft were claimed destroyed over France on the night of 8/9 August. Flying Officers T. R. Wood and R. Leafe on 604 Squadron in NF.XIII MM528/H destroyed a Do 217 and a 219 Squadron NF.XXX crew claimed two Ju 188s. In 100 Group 'Serrate' operations Denis Raby DFC and Flight Sergeant 'Jimmy' Flint DFM on 239 Squadron in a Mosquito NF.II got a Bf 109 in Northern France. Flight Lieutenant Denis Welfare DFC* and Flying Officer 'Taffy' Bellis DFC* on 239 Squadron in NF.II DZ256/U destroyed a FW 190 at Ste-Quentin and Flight Lieutenant 'Tim' Woodman and Flight Lieutenant Pat Kemmis on 169 Squadron in FB.VI NT156/Y shot down a FW 190E at Abbeville. 'Serrate' victories however, were on the wane, largely due to successful German counter-measures. In August 331'Serrate'/AI.Mk.IV sorties yielded just eight successful combats. 141 Squadron claimed just one, while 239 Squadron destroyed only three but lost two crews. 169 Squadron destroyed four. Two of the 169 Squadron Mosquito victories went to Flying Officers 'Andy' Miller DFC and Freddie Bone DFC. On 10/11 August when 104 Halifaxes and twenty Lancasters attacked the town's rail junction and rail yards their Bf 109 over Dijon was their tenth victory of the war. On 11/12 August a 219 Squadron NF.XXX crew destroyed a Ju 88 and Warrant Officer Henke and Flight Sergeant Emmerson on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF in NF.XIII MM619 got a FW 190.

Between the nights of 12/13 and 20/21 August 2nd TAF and 100 Group Mosquito crews destroyed fourteen enemy aircraft. On 12 August 117 bombers attacked fuel dumps in the Fôret de Montrichard while 68 Lancasters and two Mosquitoes blasted U-boat pens at Brest, La Pallice and Bordeaux. Eight Mosquitoes of 100 Group provided a fighter escort for the bombers attacking the French Atlantic coast and no bombers were lost during the day's operations. However, on 12/13 August when Bomber Command mounted 1,167 sorties for attacks on Brunswick, the Opel motor factory at Russelsheim, German troop concentrations at Falaise and flying-bomb sites in France a staggering 49 aircraft, or 4.2% were lost. The worst casualties were at Brunswick where the German defences destroyed seventeen Lancasters and ten Halifaxes while 134 Lancasters and seven Halifaxes failed to return from Russelsheim. Schwerterträger Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer, Kommandeur IV/NJG1 was credited with the destruction of four Viermots, all from the Russelsheim force. The first '4-mot' went down at 0048 at Wasserliesch in Germany. Lancaster III ND694 F2-R followed at 0109 and crashed at Werbomont, SSE of Liège with the loss of Flying Officer George Simpson Henderson and his crew. These victories and two more Viermots, which Schnaufer destroyed at 0115 at Gouvy 28 kilometres (seventeen miles) SSW of Malmédy and at 0110 three kilometres (1.9 miles) west of Mons, took his score to 93 victories at night. Altogether Nachtjagd claimed 47 Viermots, mainly Lancasters and Halifaxes.

'Andy' Miller's and Freddie Bone's eleventh victory on 12/13 August was not confirmed until after the war because both of them failed to return from a patrol near Heligoland. Bone picked up a contact crossing slightly at quite a rate and eventually the Mosquito FB.VI caught up with it. Vertically above Miller identified it as a He 219 'Uhu'. He dropped back to about 150 yards before giving it four two-second bursts. The Mosquito was so close that it was hit by debris and lost coolant in both engines. Miller glided in over the coast of Holland and Bone bailed out at 1,200 feet. Miller followed at 800-900 feet just before the Mosquito crashed at Friesland. Bone was captured early next morning and later sent to Stalag Luft III. Miller evaded for four weeks and he was sent along the Dutch Underground. Then the network was betrayed. He was among evaders captured at Antwerp and handed over to the Gestapo. At Dulag Luft he was confronted by Leutnant Ernst-Ewald Hittler the pilot of the He 219 he had shot down on 12/13 August and whose arm was still in a sling! Hittler and Unteroffizier Friedhelm Wildschutze both ejected safely before their 'Owl' crashed into the Schillig Straits. Miller was sent to Stalag Luft I. Freddie Bone DFC* rejoined the police force after the war and returned to the beat.

On the night of 12/13 August meanwhile, 1,167 sorties were flown by RAF Main Force and support aircraft, on targets at Brunswick, Rüsselsheim, Falaise and flying bomb sites. In all 49 aircraft were lost, mostly to Nachtjagd. At approximately 0105 hours, whilst on patrol to the north east of Enschede at an altitude 5000 metres Feldwebel Robert Koch and his bordfunker of 6./NJG1 flying a Bf 110G at Sint Trond reported an engagement with a Viermot on fire after being hit by flak. In the heat of battle the gunners on Lancaster LM658 on 100 Squadron mistakenly identified the attacking aircraft as a Me 410 but none was operational in the area that night. After two minutes of violent evasive action by Flight Lieutenant Harold 'Bill' Paston-Williams, Flying Officer Bruce David RCAF the rear gunner called to resume course as he had lost sight of the attacking fighter. As LM658 levelled out, the crew all felt the thump of cannon shells hitting the fuselage from behind and below. Koch had managed to shadow them unseen into the corkscrew. Paston-Williams glanced to port and saw a stream of tracer just missing the wing and immediately took evasive action, throwing her to starboard and pulling back hard on the column, but the control surfaces were no longer responding properly and the airframe, weakened by the fire finally failed and the whole tail section of the aircraft broke away. Realising all control was lost, Paston-Williams signalled the order to abandon, as by now all contact had been lost via the intercom due to electrical system failure. Bruce David, cut off by flames and exploding ammunition had successfully exited from the rear of the aircraft. Paston-Williams and Downie were both blown clear and knocked unconscious, but Flight Sergeant Laurence Roy Watts the 23-year old wireless operator never made it out and was carried down with the nose section of the disintegrating bomber. Pilot Officer Benjamin Ramsden the 31-year old bomb aimer forced open the forward escape hatch and jumped, followed by the 22-year old navigator, Pilot Officer Gerald Hood, Flight Lieutenant Christopher Holland

the 21-year old 'second dickie' from Horsham, Sussex and Flight Sergeant Robert Stanley Williams the 25-year old mid-upper gunner. At this point the aircraft exploded, broke up and lurched over into its final fall to earth. Flight Sergeant John A. Downie the 31-year old flight engineer was semi- conscious and falling head over heels through the night air, he quickly came to and realised that his parachute harness was only half fastened, he managed to pull the rip-cord and regain his senses, from which point he had a clear view of the burning wreckage of LM658 falling to earth. Paston-Williams, who had been blown out of the aircraft at the same time as Downie, had free-fallen much further, regaining consciousness just in time to pull his chute, landing almost immediately in a soft peat bog. Despite successfully exiting the aircraft Ramsden, Holland and Williams had somehow been knocked unconscious. Their bodies were found within 500 feet of the wreckage, 'chutes on but unopened. The body of Laurence Watts was found under the wreckage. He was half way out of the escape hatch with his parachute on.

Paston-Williams, Downie and Hood were picked up by local Dutch sympathisers later in the morning. David was unsure of who to trust and continued to evade until captured and arrested to become a PoW. Hood meanwhile, had landed safely but in escaping from the burning aircraft he had suffered serious burns to his legs. Alone, in shock and unsure of his exact position, he was soon found by Jan Piksen, a local resistance leader well practised in locating and containing aircrews soon after they had bailed out. Soon after rescuing Hood, Jan Piksen was betrayed, ambushed and shot dead near Haarle whilst attempting to make contact with another newly bailed out crew. Over the next few days Hood was moved to the nearby village of Nyverdal to an established safe house, the home of Madame Ebeltje van der Wal, a widow who lived with her 23-year-old daughter Grietje. Hood was hidden by Dutch families until January 1945 when betrayal resulted in arrests and he was condemned to death as a spy. He was executed on the outskirts of Zenderen at the edge of a wood on 21 March. Two days later Bote van der Wal his Dutch helper met the same fate in exactly the same spot.

On the night of the 14/15th August there was no Main Force activity. Apart from a raid on Berlin and other targets by 36 Mosquitoes the only other operations were 'Gardening' sorties by eight Halifaxes and six Lancasters mine-laying off Biscay ports and four aircraft on Resistance operations while seven OTU sorties were flown. Squadron Leader James Dean Somerville and Flying Officer G. D. Robinson on 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF again in NF.XIII MM477/U equipped with AI.Mk.VIII went in search of their fifth victory. Fifteen miles due West of Le Havre they picked up a contact and Somerville pulled in behind it about 1½ miles behind before he started to close. Robinson maintained contact on the AI as Somerville closed the range until finally the enemy aircraft levelled off at about 10,500 feet after turning a complete 360°. Somerville got to within 1,800 feet and almost directly above before he started to pull up. The enemy machine's exhausts disappeared but visual was regained at 800 feet range and Somerville closed to 600 feet and saw that it was a Ju 88. Robinson

looked through his Ross Night Glasses and from directly underneath he confirmed his pilot's recognition. Somerville dropped back to 450 feet, pulled up to dead astern and opened fire. The fuselage of the Ju 88 burst with a violent explosion and disintegrated without firing a shot. Somerville pulled up in a very steep climb and broke away to starboard. He asked control for a fix and was given fifteen miles due west of Le Havre.

On Tuesday the 15th 1,004 aircraft attacked night-fighter airfields in Holland and Belgium in preparation for a renewed night offensive against Germany. A force of 110 Lancasters and four Mosquitoes heavily cratered Volkel and put both runways out of action. Three Lancasters failed to return. That night only Minor Operations were flown and all aircraft returned although two of the 32 Mosquitoes that attacked Berlin were claimed by Feldwebel Keller and Leutnant Emil Kriegbaum of JG300. On 16/17 August the port of Stettin was targeted by 461 Lancasters from high level at approximately the same time as mining by 89 aircraft was to take place in the Baltic and in Kiel Bay. Another 348 aircraft were detailed for a heavy raid on Kiel. Five Lancasters were lost on Stettin and three Halifaxes and two Lancasters on Kiel. Three Halifax minelayers were lost in Kiel Bay and two Lancasters on 'Gardening' operation off Swinemünde also failed to return. Eleven Viermots were claimed by Nachtjagd. Oberleutnant Arnold 'Fritz' Brinkmann of 8./NJG3 claimed a Viermot NNE of Kiel, Oberfeldwebel Martin Kramer of Stab NJG3 in a Ju 88G-1 another Viermot southeast of Kiel for his third Abschüsse and Oberleutnant Fritz Lau a Viermot west of Kiel. Kramer and his crew were killed on the night of 31 December 1944/1 January 1945 during aerial combat. He had four victories. Oberfeldwebel Herbert Giesecke of 3./NJG3, Oberleutnant Langnickel of 12./NJG3 and Feldwebel Klaus Möller each claimed a Viermot in the North Sea. Möller also claimed a Viermot at Zeeland for his eighth Abschüsse. Other victories were claimed by Major Werner Husemann for his 26th Abschüsse and Oberleutnant Herbert Koch, whose double victory took him to sixteen Abschüsse. Warrant Officers 'Mac' MacDonald and 'Curly' Colborne on a 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF Mosquito claimed a Ju 188 and Flight Lieutenants Michael J. Gloster DFC and James F. Oswold DFC claimed a Ju 188 also, near Caen for their tenth and final victory.

Warrant Officer E. A. Lampkin and Flight Sergeant Bernard J. Wallnut his navigator/radar operator on 141 Squadron who were on patrol on Mosquito HR213 TW-G claimed a Bf 110 in Ringkobing Fjord which they hit in the port wing and exploded and crumpled up, splitting the centre of the fuselage. Bf 110G-4 D5+BK crashed into the North Sea off the west coast of Denmark. The bodies of Unteroffizier Josef Armsdorfer and Gefreiter Erich Wamken were lost without trace. Obergefreiter Otto Romahn the 21-year old bordmechaniker was washed ashore on 22 August.[88] Lampkin and Wallnut were shot down during their patrol to Diepholz airfield on 30 November. Lampkin was last heard transmitting 'Winball 20 pranging in Holland.' Wallnut was killed and Lampkin was taken prisoner.

On the starlit and clear night of Friday 25th/Saturday 26th August Rüsselsheim, Darmstadt and Brest were the targets for the Main Force.

Fifteen Lancasters and Fortress III HB763 BU-T on 214 Squadron on a Bomber Support sortie were shot down on Rüsselsheim. Warrant Officer John R, Lee and five of his crew were taken prisoner. The four other crew members were killed.[89] Seven more aircraft were lost on Darmstadt and a Halifax and a Lancaster failed to return from Brest. Nachtjäger claimed 26 Viermots including three by Hauptmann Martin 'Tino' Becker of 2,/NJG6 northwest, southwest and WSW of Rüsselsheim for his 39-41st victories. Twenty-one year old Leutnant Achim Woeste, an 'Experte' of 7.NJG3 with six victories took off in Ju 88G-1 D5+BR and claimed his seventh Abschusse; a '4-mot' sixty kilometres northwest of Mannheim. Just before take-off at Great Massingham in North Norfolk, Warrant Officer Les Turner on 169 Squadron read Press reports of the discovery of the extermination ovens at Lübeck. He was so incensed that he was determined that any German within range was not going to aid that war effort. He and his navigator, Flight Sergeant Frank Francis were determined to add to the Bf 109 they had shot down on 14/15 July. Turner set course immediately over the airfield, crossing the Norfolk and enemy coasts on schedule. There was low cloud over most of the route. 'Nothing of note occurred until at 2345 at 20,000 feet considerable searchlight activity was observed to port' wrote Turner. 'It was apparent that there were aircraft of some sort concerned so we decided to investigate and forthwith 'mucked in' with a Hun searchlight co-op exercise. Occasional fleeting AI contacts were obtained, possibly single-engined, at about 25,000 feet, which made the chances of interception very slim with a Mosquito VI. Having ourselves been coned on two occasions and discretion being the better part of valour, we proceeded to leave that area and attempt to reach our scheduled patrol area. At 0030, nothing further having been seen, we turned on a reciprocal westerly course and after about twenty minutes' flying, obtained at 0050, 20,000 feet, a forward AI contact at maximum range. Target appeared to be crossing port to starboard. We chased for approximately five minutes, reducing height to 14,000 feet where target was held in dead ahead position at 1,000 feet range. A visual was obtained and range reduced to 500 feet where aircraft was positively identified as a Ju 88.'

It was Ju 88G-1 D5+BR. Turner and Francis allowed their target to pull away to 1,000 feet range and then Turner opened fire. The Ju 88's port engine immediately burst into flames and the aircraft turned gently starboard into a diving turn leaving a long spiral of grey smoke. Turner followed, firing intermittently, observing strikes all over the fuselage. Altogether, he fired 480 rounds of cannon shells at his quarry which hit the ground with a tremendous flash near Mulsum, 42 kilometres east of Bremen at 0057 hours. Woeste, who would have turned 22 on 31 August and Unteroffizier Anton Albrecht, were killed. Unteroffizier Heinz Thippe and Gefreiter Karl Walkenberger, who were both wounded, bailed out.

Among the other German claimants this night were Oberfeldwebel Leuenz of 2./NJG101 who destroyed a '4-mot' at Rüsselsheim for his first and only victory; Unteroffizier Hans Rechenberg of 1./NJG6 who claimed a 'Lanki' southeast of Darmstadt - his only victory - and Leutnant Johannes

Strassner of 2,/NJG2 south of Mainz for his seventh Abschüsse. Strassner was forced to bail out of his Ju 88G-6 on 1 February 1945 after being shot down by another German night-fighter at Noithausen, Grevenbroich. He was wounded in action on 15/16 February when he crashed at Ziesar near Burg after aerial combat. He survived 54 combat sorties and ended the war with six Abschüsse.[90] Unteroffizier Rudnik claimed a Viermot east of Bingen for his second and final victory. Oberfeldwebel Walter Exner of 7./NJG2 who had shot down two Viermots north of Paris on 8 June, claimed a Viermot at Wiesbaden before he was shot down and killed shortly after during aerial combat at Lollar. Hauptmann Harold Lange claimed a '4-mot' at Darmstadt and Hauptmann Ernst Wallner a Lancaster at Rüsselsheim and a Halifax at Sulzbach for his third and fourth victories. He was to claim his fifth and final victory on 4/5 December when he was shot down and killed by return fire from the Lancaster he destroyed at Ludwigsburg near Winzerhausen during a RAF raid on Heilbron. Unteroffizier Willmann of 7./NJG2 claimed a Viermot at Darmstadt for his third and final victory. Unteroffizier 'Kurt' Boldt of 8./NJG2 claimed a Viermot at Ludwigshafen for his third victory. Boldt was killed on 11/12 November 1944 during aerial combat near Arnsberg. Twenty-seven year old Hauptmann Heinz-Horst Hissbach of 5./NJG2 claimed his 27th Abschüsse when he shot down a Viermot at Darmstadt. Leutnant Kurt Welter claimed a Mosquito near Nienburg but no Mosquitoes were lost.

On the night of 26/27 August 372 Lancasters and ten Mosquitoes visited Kiel and 174 Lancasters went to Königsberg, an important supply port for the German Eastern Front and the capital of East Prussia. Seventeen Lancasters were lost on Kiel, all of which were probably shot down by 'Tame Boars' and four Lancasters failed to return from Königsberg. Oberleutnant Arnold 'Fritz' Brinkmann of 8./NJG3 claimed three Lancasters to take his score to eleven Abschüsse. Unteroffizier Hans Schadowski of 3./NJG3 claimed two Viermots to take his score to fifteen. Feldwebel Gottfried Schneider of 1./NJG3 claimed two '4-mots' north of Schleswig for his 14-15th victories. He claimed his sixteenth victory on the next Main Force raid, on the night of 29/30 August when 402 Lancasters and one Mosquito attacked Stettin for the loss of 23 Lancasters and another 189 Lancasters carried out one of their most successful attacks of the war on Königsberg. Fifteen Lancasters were lost and another 23 Lancasters failed to return on Stettin. Nachtjagd claimed 47 Viermots destroyed for the loss of seven 'Tame Boars'. 100 Group Mosquitoes submitted only one claim: Dennis Hughes and 'Dickie Perks on 239 Squadron on NF.II W4097, a Ju 88 at 0205 hours during a patrol in the Neuruppin area. A Ju 88G-1 of 3./NJG2 reportedly crashed at Tellow near Horkow after a Fernnachtjäger (long-range intruder) attack, twenty kilometres southeast of the location where the Mosquito crew reported their victim went in. Unteroffizier Volkhard Petzold, an inexperienced replacement pilot was killed. His crew bailed out uninjured. In 1,520 sorties during August, Nachtjagd aircraft scored 164 victories, or 1.6 per cent of all Bomber Command sorties dispatched, losing 38 aircraft. Nachtjagd's effectiveness further declined during September deprived as it

was of ground radar control, the 'Y' service and its forward airfields in France. Just 76 kills were logged in 1,301 sorties or just 1.1 per cent of 6,400 Bomber Command sorties. With the Allied armies advancing into France the Chief of Air Staff once again gained control of Bomber Command, which resumed its area bombing campaign and also mounted a new precision bombing campaign against oil and transportation targets.

On 6 September Emden was bombed in daylight by 181 heavies escorted first by Spitfires and then American Mustangs, for the loss of one Lancaster. It was the final Bomber Command raid of the war on the city. On the 9th 272 aircraft of the Main Force were dispatched to Le Havre but because of poor visibility, the Master Bomber ordered the raid to be abandoned before any of the heavies bombed. Venlo now faced an increased threat of Allied air attack. On 5 September I./NJG 1 was transferred to Münster/Handorf. On the evening of 9 September during a training flight to Rheine, two He 219s of 2. Staffel were attacked by American fighters. Heinkel 219A-2 G9+DK was shot down at 1755 hours with the loss of Oberfeldwebel Heinz Jadatz and Unteroffiziers Alfred Schindler and Heinrich Wennholz. Heinkel 219A-0 G9+OK was badly damaged in air combat and Feldwebel Karl Wildhagen tried to escape under cover of the Hopsten airfield's flak belt but was hit while attempting to land and crashed onto the concrete runway at 1758. Wildhagen was killed and three others who were on board with him were wounded in the attack.

Another RAF daylight raid, on eight different strong points at Le Havre on 10 September, involved 992 heavies and all the bombers returned safely. A follow up raid the next day also saw the return of all 218 aircraft involved. On 11 September, 379 bombers escorted by 26 squadrons of Spitfires, Mustangs and Tempests pounded synthetic oil plants at Castrop-Rauxel, Kamen and Gelsenkirchen (Nordstern). German fighters were noticeable by their absence though eight heavies were lost to flak or to 'friendly' bombs. Nachtjagd made several claims on the night of 11/12 September when twelve Lancasters failed to return from a raid on Darmstadt by 226 Lancasters and fourteen Mosquitoes. Three Lancaster minelayers were lost in the Kattegat and Leutnant Kurt Welter of 10./JG300 was credited with shooting down a Mosquito (B.XX KB227 on 139 Squadron); one of 47 which went to Berlin. Twenty-three year old Flight Lieutenant James Angus Francis Halcro RCAF from Ottawa and Flight Lieutenant T. J. Martin RCAF were killed.

Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Bill Skelton DFC* on 85 Squadron on patrol in NF.XIX/Y in the Baltic identified a silhouette with twin-engines and a single fin through binoculars at 800 feet. They closed to 600 feet and Burbridge fired two short bursts, starting a fire in the fuselage. Breaking away to port and climbing, Burbridge could no longer see the fire. When he turned in, he saw the Junkers go down in flames. They claimed a 'Ju 188'destroyed. It was a Ju 88G-1 flown by Oberfeldwebel Gerhard Schmitz of 6/NJG7 at Grove. The 'Night Destroyers,' as they were now known in the press, closed in and shot the aircraft down. Schmitz and his bordshütze bailed out before the Junkers

crashed on a farm near Hojme, west of Odense but Schmitz broke a leg on landing. Unteroffizier Heinrich Heckmann the bordfunker was found next to the crashed aircraft. Severely wounded, he was taken to hospital but died the same day. Squadron Leader James Benson DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Lewis Brandon DFC* on 157 Squadron in Mosquito NF.XIX MM630/E claimed two Ju 188s east of Sjaelland in Denmark to take their score to seven kills. One of their victims was actually a Ju 88G-1 piloted by Feldwebel Reinhold Schwemmer of 1/NJG7 at Katsrup. Benson sent the Junkers down into the Baltic. The bodies of Unteroffizier 'Willi' Ritzer and Unteroffizier Heinrich Schmid were not found for some time. Ritzer was retrieved from the sea on 21 September and Schmid near Kalvehave on the 23rd. Schwemmer has no known grave.

A head-on AI contact was obtained by Flight Lieutenant Peter A. Bates and Pilot Officer William Guy Cadman on 141 Squadron ten miles northwest of Frankfurt at 2350 hours at 18,000 feet. Both aircraft went into a dogfight lasting twenty minutes with neither aircraft getting anywhere. Eventually the contact made off to the northwest. A chase lasting five minutes ensued but the contact eluded them. Bates and Cadman returned to the target area and as the bombing had ended, decided to fly slowly westward in the hope of deceiving enemy fighters that it was a straggling bomber. Twenty miles west of Darmstadt, a backward AI contact was picked up 12,000 feet behind crossing starboard to port. Bates turned and followed. For almost twenty minutes the Mosquito tailed the enemy machine through twists and turns towards Darmstadt. Eventually, Bates closed to 900 feet range and a visual was obtained on two exhausts. Bates and Cadman dropped back but the visual was lost. Closing again a pale bluish-white light was seen underneath the dim silhouette of an aircraft. At that moment, the enemy aircraft opened up from the upper gun position and tracer hit the Mosquito's starboard drop tank. Bates pulled up, visual was regained on the exhausts and he gave the enemy aircraft a burst of two-to-three seconds of cannon fire from 600 feet range. The enemy's starboard engine exploded and Bates had to pull up to avoid a collision as it passed underneath. It was then that they could see in the light of the explosion that it was a Bf 110. Cadman watched the contact going down on his AI set before the Bf 110 hit the ground and exploded. Leutnant Rose of 3/NJG6 who had one Abschuss, was wounded.

On the night of 12/13 September, Oberleutnant Georg Hermann Greiner and his bordfunker Oberfeldwebel Rolf Kissing took off from Dortmund in a Bf 110G-4 to intercept a force of 378 RAF Lancasters headed for Frankfurt. A few minutes after take-off his Bf 110 was hit by cannon fire from an intruding RAF Mosquito night fighter. Greiner ordered Kissing to bail out. However, the bordfunker had been wounded in the attack and could not obey the order. Greiner decided to attempt a landing back at Dortmund despite having one engine on fire. He successfully crash-landed the aircraft but Kissing had already died from his wounds. Seventeen Lancasters of the Frankfurt force were lost and four more failed to return from the raid on Stuttgart by another 204 Lancs. Oberfeldwebel Ludwig Schmidt of 2/NJG6

flying a Ju 88G with his bordfunker Unteroffizier Kainzmeier claimed a 'Lanki' east of Mannheim and one of the Stuttgart raiders, Lancaster LM226 PO-H on 467 Squadron RAAF at Darmstadt. Twenty-one year old Flight Lieutenant David Dorey Browne RAAF and four crew were killed and the two other crew were taken prisoner.

'Wilde Sau' pilots Leutnant Kurt Welter and Oberfeldwebel Baltenschat of 10./JG300 claimed two Mosquitoes each. No Mosquito bombers were lost, though a NF.II crew on 239 Squadron on DZ254 failed to return to West Raynham. Graves containing 24-year old Flying Officer 'Bright Eyes' Breithaupt DFC RCAF and Flying Officer 'Jimmy' Kennedy DFC DFM were found at Ranschbach K50/R26 Cemetery (7 kilometres west of Landau) on 15 January 1947. According to the Burgomeister, August Bosch witnesses had stated that a twin-engined aircraft of wooden construction crashed between 2300 hours and midnight on 12 September 1944, one kilometre west of Ranschbach. The aircraft exploded and burned on contact with the ground. This aircraft was shot down by a Bf 110 which was also shot down by the RAF aircraft before it crashed. The crew of the Bf 110 bailed and confirmed that they had been shot down by this aircraft. Two badly charred bodies were found in the cockpit and buried without coffins in the village cemetery. No military or religious ceremony was accorded. Four other German aircraft were claimed shot down by 100 Group and 2nd TAF Mosquito 'Intruders'.

There was little if anything that the Nachtjagd could do to staunch the night offensive and while RAF raids by over 1,000 bombers became fairly commonplace operational losses began to fall quite dramatically. This was due in part to the resourcefulness of Mosquito night fighter crews of 2nd TAF and 100 Group. Navigator-radar operator Flight Sergeant Robert Denison MacKinnon had never been to Night-Flying Training School but 85 Squadron had been short of navigators at the time and he was posted straight from training to the unit. He teamed up with Flight Lieutenant 'Bill' House and they had flown their first op over Europe on the night prior to 'D-Day' when they flew an intruder patrol over the Cherbourg Peninsular in support of the hundreds of US gliders crossing the Channel. MacKinnon's first encounter with the enemy, in a NF.XIX on 13/14 September was eventful, as he recalls: 'I guided Bill onto a Me 110 near Koblenz and managed it without the crew being aware of us. Bill opened fire and I thought it was us who were being attacked. The noise to me was terrifying but to the enemy it must have been terrible. I think that we must have hit its oxygen bottles because the whole plane just blew up in front of our eyes.' Their victim was a Bf 110G-4 of 5./NJG1 piloted by Oberleutnant Gottfried Hanneck who suffered second and third degree burns to his head and hands but managed to bail out safely. Unteroffizier Erich Sacher, the bordfunker and Feldwebel 'Willi' Wurschitz Hanneck's bordshütze were killed in the crash at Birresborn in the Eifel. Hanneck was philosophical: 'In this way, a RAF long-range night fighter 'revenged' my six night kills of four-engined bombers.'

Two Mosquito bombers, which failed to return from the attack on Berlin

on 13/14 September were claimed shot down southeast of the capital by Oberfeldwebel Egbert Jaacks of I./NJG10 in a Heinkel 219 'Owl' for his seventh and final victory[91] and at Braunschweig by Leutnant Karl Mitterdorfer of 10./JG300 in a Bf 109G-10. Squadron Leader Charles Rennie Barrett DFC and Flying Officer Edward Sydney Fogden on 608 Squadron and Pilot Officer Gwilym Rhys Thomas and Flying Officer John Herbert Rosbottom on 692 Squadron both crashed near Nauen with no survivors. Mitterdorfer destroyed his second Mosquio on 5 October 1944 over Berlin. His last flight in a Bf 109 while with NJG10 was from Rechlin to Lübeck with Feldwebel Helmut Happel in the cockpit to surrender to British forces.

On 15/16 September 490 aircraft bombed Kiel for the loss of four Halifaxes and two Lancasters. Three Mosquitoes and a Stirling on 199 Squadron in 100 Group were lost on Bomber Support and a Mosquito XX on 608 Squadron failed to return from a raid on Berlin.92 Leutnant Kurt Welter claimed two of the Mosquitoes, one south of Berlin and the other north of Aachmer and Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach of 10./JG300 one other northwest of Wittenberg. One of Welter's victims was a 515 Squadron FB.VI flown by Squadron Leader Charles Brian Best DFC and Flight Sergeant Harry Dickinson, who were both killed. Squadron Leader John Harry McKellar Chisholm and Flight Lieutenant Eric Lawless Wilde on 157 Squadron disappeared without trace. Reichenbach's victim was a FB.VI on 239 Squadron flown by Flying Officer Edward Walter Osborne and Pilot Officer George Victor Acheson, who were killed. North of Wittenberg on 18/19 September Welter claimed Mosquito B.XV DZ635 on 627 Squadron, which crashed at Schiffdorf in the eastern outskirts of Bremerhaven. Australian Flight Lieutenant Norman Bayne Rutherford AFC and Pilot Officer Frederick Herbert Stanbury died.

On 16/17 September Bomber Command's operations were in support of the Allied airborne landings at Arnhem and Nijmegen in Holland. Six Mosquitoes of 239 Squadron supported attacks on German airfields in Holland and Germany during the night and 141 Squadron took part at dawn on the 17th. Wing Commander Charles V. 'Winnie' Winn and five other Mosquito crews carried out a low-level attack on Steenwijk, one of three airfields bombed during the night. Four Mosquitoes were damaged by flak. Winn damaged a twin-engined Junkers on the ground and buildings and personnel were strafed. Trains were attacked on the way home. Six more Mosquitoes on 239 Squadron kept up the momentum, with support raids on the airfields again on the night of 17/18 September. East of Arnhem Bf 110G-4 G9+MY of 11./NJG1 was shot down by Flying Officers 'Ginger' Owen and Victor McAllister DFM on 85 Squadron. Walter Sjuts and Unteroffiziers Herbert Schmidt and Ernst Fischer were killed. 'Ginger' Owen and Victor McAllister also shot down Bf 110G-4 G9+GZ of 12./NJG1 in the same area. Unteroffiziers' Heinz Gesse and Josef Kaschub and Obergefreiter Josef Limberg died. At last light on 18 September, two Mosquitoes on 141 Squadron flew protective patrols for nine Fortresses on 214 and 223 Squadrons supplying a 'Mandrel' screen[93] off the Dutch coast and the action was repeated again at first light on the 19th. The Fortresses were covered by

two 141 Squadron Mosquitoes again at last light on the 22nd.

On 23/24 September RAF Bomber Command lost 22 aircraft in 923 sorties on Neuss, the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen and Münster-Handorf airfield. The greatest loss was at the Dortmund-Ems Canal where fourteen Lancasters were shot down. Ritterkreuzträger Hauptmann Ernst-Wilhelm Modrow, Staffelkapitän, I./NJG1 in a He 219 'Uhu' who had destroyed four Lancasters on 21/22 June, destroyed two Viermots for his 30th and 31st victories. His second kill of the night was Halifax III MZ763 on 78 Squadron, which was being flown by Flying Officer John Stewart Swanson, which Modrow claimed shot down 75 kilometres WNW of Düsseldorf. MZ763 crashed near Weert with the loss of Swanson and three crew killed. One crewmember was taken prisoner and two evaded. His final tally was 34 combat victories, 33 in the Heinkel 219 Uhu) in 259 sorties, including 109 as a night fighter pilot, between March 1944 and January 1945.(In the period 12 June 1943-2 July 1944 twenty 'Uhu' pilots destroyed 111 Bomber Command aircraft including seven Mosquitoes. Modrow was the top-scoring pilot in this period with 25 victories).

Among the other claimants on the night when Hauptmann Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer destroyed four Lancasters, Hauptmann Georg Hermann Greiner and his bordfunker Feldwebel Hammendörfer claimed[94] a Lancaster I (ME732/P on 61 Squadron) which lost three Lancasters on the raid on the canal crashed at Almelo. Flight Lieutenant Donald Edward Ross Stone and five of his crew were killed. Sergeant Edward F. Ravenhill, mid-upper gunner and Sergeant Alfred Roy Fellows, rear gunner, were the only survivors on the eight man crew.[95]

Oberleutnant Lothar Jarsch of 4./NJG2 destroyed two 'Lanki's' at radio beacon 'Ida' southeast of Mönchengladbach for his 5th and 6th victories, northwest of Münster Oberfeldwebel Heinrich Breitenfelder of 5./NJG2 claimed a Lancaster for his second victory and Feldwebel Anton Weissensel of 11./NJG1 claimed a Viermot at Maastricht for his first and last Abschuss before he was killed during aerial combat at Oldendorf. His crew bailed out. Leutnant Otto Teschner of IV./NJG1 claimed his Lancaster north of Nijmegen for his seventh and final victory. He was killed on Christmas Day during aerial combat three kilometres east of Dortmund. Oberleutnant Dietrich Schmidt, Staffelkapitän 8./NJG1 claimed a 'Lanki' on the southern edge of the Zuider Zee, which has not been identified. Leutnant Theodor Adamski of Schmidt's Staffel downed another Lancaster at 2327 hours in the Brummen-Zutphen area. This probably was PD318 on 207 Squadron, which came down at Uddel, WNW Apeldoorn at 2330 hours. Twenty-two year old Flying Officer Raymond Thomas Kerwin RAAF and his crew were killed.

On 25/26 September He 219A-0 of 2/NJG1 was unable to lower its landing flaps or undercarriage because of battle damage and came down too hard while attempting a belly landing at Münster-Handorf. Leutnant Günther Schirmer and his bordfunker, Gefreiter Wilhelm Rosenberger were rescued with serious injuries. The night following, Hauptmann Josef Krahorst of 2/NJG4 flying a Bf 110G-4 was killed during aerial combat with

a Mosquito, crashing at Somborn. He had eleven Abschüsse.

By October 1944 the fuel crisis in the Reich had reached such proportions that only the 'Experten' were sent against incoming raids. They flew 866 sorties, resulting in just 56 victories (or 0.5 per cent of 10,000 Bomber Command sorties). Nachtjagd ranks were further depleted by 54 aircraft and crews (or 6.2 per cent) during October. (During the remainder of the war, with only one or two exceptions, Nachtjagd never succeeded in exacting a toll of an average of more than one per cent of the British night raiders). November saw 959 night-fighter sorties dispatched, crews returning with claims for 87 kills (or 0.9 per cent of Bomber Command's night raids).

Oberleutnant Georg 'Hermann' Greiner of IV./NJG1 was one of the Experten who had been permitted to take off to intercept Viermots during October. On the night of 6/7 October the Path Finders succeeded in illuminating the Dummer See, a large lake northeast of Osnabrück, which was used as a run-in point when 237 aircraft were dispatched. The bombing was well concentrated. Six aircraft were lost. One of the two Halifaxes that failed to return was 'E-Easy' on 103 Squadron at Elsham Wolds, which was flown by Sergeant James Porter, a soft-voiced Scot. Oberleutnant Greiner is believed to have shot the Halifax down. 'E-Easy' crashed off Ameland with the loss of all the crew. Porter was planning to marry at Christmas and had kept a photo of the girl above his bed.

Another of the 'Experten' who had been permitted to take off to intercept RAF Viermots during October was Helmut Lent, who had been awarded the Ritterkreuz with Eichenlaub, Schwerter and Brillanten and had 110 victories in 507 day and night sorties, making him the second highest scoring Nachtjagd 'Experte' of the war. The total includes 102 victories at night, during which he destroyed 59 Viermots and one Mosquito, among other types. On 5 October Lent flew his Ju-88G-6 from Stade to Nordborchen, five kilometres (three miles) south of Paderborn. His crew included his long-time bordfunker Oberfeldwebel Walter Kubisch, the war correspondent Leutnant Werner Kark in the aerial gunner position and Oberleutnant Hermann Klöss, second funker. Kark was the official war correspondent of NJG3. He had been attached to a series of front-line Luftwaffe units since 1940, flying many sorties as a full member of crew over England, Greece, Africa and Russia, before being posted to NJG3 where he trained and flew as bordmechaniker.[96] Lent was on his way to visit the Geschwaderkommodore of NJG1, Oberstleutnant Hans-Joachim Jabs, to discuss operational matters. During the landing approach, the left engine of the Ju 88G-6 failed causing the wing to dip. Lent was unable to keep the Junkers steady and it struck high-voltage cables and crashed. All four members of the crew sustained serious injuries but were rescued alive. Kubisch who had suffered severe burns, internal injuries and extensive fractures, died during an emergency operation and Klöss succumbed to his head injuries on the same day. Kark died the following next morning from similar causes and Lent himself died two days later on 7 October.

Helmut Lent's state funeral was held in the Reich Chancellery, Berlin, on

Wednesday 11 October. Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring took the salute at Lent's coffin, which was draped in the national flag of the Third Reich. Ahead of the coffin, carrying Lent's honours and decorations on a velvet cushion, marched Oberstleutnant Werner Streib, the Inspector of Night Fighters. Six steel-helmeted officers, all recipients of the Knight's Cross, escorted the coffin on its caisson and stood as guard of honour during the ceremony: Oberstleutnant Günther Radusch, Oberstleutnant Hans-Joachim Jabs, Major Rudolf Schönert, Hauptmann Heinz Strüning, Hauptmann Karl Hadeball and Hauptmann Paul Zorner. On 12 October Lent and his crew were interred in a single grave in the military cemetery at Stade. Lent received a posthumous promotion to Oberst.

Endnotes Chapter 7

85 After further interrogation in Cherbourg and a spell in captivity in England Autenrieth (and 'Schorsch' Helbig) were sent to the United States where they spent the next one and a half years in a PoW camp.

86 *The JG 26 War Diary Vol.2 1943-1945* by Donald L. Caldwell (Grub Street, London 1998). Laub was KIA on 14.12.44.

87 Jameson returned to New Zealand and the award of a DSO followed. Crookes, who after the war became a teacher in Kent, received a bar to his DFC. Jamie's score made him the highest scoring New Zealand fighter pilot of the war.

88 *Air War Over Denmark* by Søren C. Flensted

89 An account in Ian Mackersey's *Into the Silk* describes the amazing survival story of John Lee who survived a long fall despite the fact that his parachute never fully deployed.

90 He died on 3 September 1998.

91 Flying the Bf 109 Jaacks had destroyed four Soviet aircraft in the spring and summer of 1943, a Halifax fifteen kilometres southwest of Berlin on 2 December anda Soviet TB-7 over Helsinki on 26 February1944. On 10 May he claimed a B-24 southeast of Neusiedler See, Austria near the Hungarian border.

92 Flight Lieutenant Bert Howard Smith RCAF and Sergeant Leonard Frederick Pegg KIA.

93 'Mandrel' was a jamming device designed to jam German Early Warning ground radar in the 10-MHz bands (FuMG 80 Freya, Freya Fahourstuhl, ['Freya Lift'] FuMG 404 Jagdscloss ['Hunting Castle'], FuMo 51 Mammut ['Mammoth'] and FuMG 402 Wassermann I 'Aquarian']).

94 According to the Kracker Archive.

95 This claim is also given in the Kracker Archive to Leutnant Wolfram Möckel of 4/NJG2 in a Ju 88G-1.

96 *The Lent Papers* by Peter Hinchliffe (Cerberus, 2003).

Chapter 8

Moskitopanik!

The mere presence in the circuits of Micawber-like Mosquitoes, 'waiting for something to turn up' as they lurked one by one to cover the whole night period, was enough to cause morale-sapping Moskitopanik throughout Germany in the summer of 1944.
Confounding the Reich: The RAF's Secret War of Electronic Countermeasures in WWII.

Over the Reich airwaves triumphant German battle cries of a few months previously had now given way to 'Achtung Moskito': the bed of heavenly bliss' had become a bed of nails. As well as having to contend with the heavies for the last few months of the German night fighter defences also had to contend with increasing numbers of 'Intruder' aircraft in the circuit over the night-fighter bases. 100 Group Mosquitoes made a very important contribution to Bomber Support. They also took part in the 'Window' feints flying with them to add to the effect of deception and then fanning out to take advantage of enemy reaction. In October 1944 the 'Serrate' Squadrons destroyed six enemy aircraft and the AI.Mk.X Mosquito Squadrons' five. 141 Squadron shot down three Luftwaffe aircraft, although these were accomplished using AI and not 'Serrate'; 239 also scored three. 169 Squadron, which damaged three enemy aircraft that month, was already having nine of its 'Serrate' homers replaced by 'Perfectos'.[97]

The first of the victories by 141 Squadron occurred on 6/7 October when Flight Lieutenant A. C. Gallacher DFC and Pilot Officer G. McLean DFC destroyed a Ju 88G-1 of 10./NJG3, which crashed into a wooded area at Beetsterzwaag, southwest of Groningen, during a 'Serrate' patrol to Dortmund and Bremen. Oberleutnant Walter Briegleb and Unteroffizier's Brandt, bordmechaniker and Walter Braunlich, bordschütze were wounded in the encounter. Feldwebel Paul Kowalewski, bordfunker was killed. At the time Briegleb was one of the most successful replacement pilots in the Nachtjagd with seventeen victories. He survived the war as Staffelkapitän of 7./NJG2 and had 25 night victories. Hauptmann Erich Karl Frey of Stab II/NJG1 pilot of a Bf 110G-4 was shot down killed during aerial combat with either Flying Officer R. H. Finlayson and Flying Officer J. A. Webster on a Mosquito NF.XIII on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF[98] or a USAAF P-61 'Black Widow' night fighter piloted by Captain Tadas Spells and Flight Officer Klefherien at Gembloux in Belgium. Unteroffiziers Gerhard Schultze, his funker and Bernard Schaaf, bordshutze, died also. On 6/7 October also Leutnant Kurt Welter and two other 10./JG300 pilots claimed three Mosquitoes over Berlin. Feldwebel Herbert A. Püchner of 6/NJG1 flying a Bf 110 was shot down twelve kilometres southwest of Ede and killed by a Mosquito NF.XX 'Intruder' on 219

Squadron crewed by Flight Lieutenant Gerald Richard Ian 'Sailor' Parker DSM and Warrant Officer D. L. Godfrey for their fifth victory.

The night following, 7/8 October Flight Lieutenant 'Jimmy' Mathews and Warrant Officer 'Penny' Penrose on 157 Squadron picked up a contact at six miles range west of Neumünster while on a high level support sortie. Mathews narrowed the range and as they got a visual at 1,000 yards the target straightened out. It was recognized as a Me 410 with long range tanks. Mathews opened fire with a shórt burst from 100 yards dead behind. Strikes were seen and a small explosion occurred in the starboard engine. Another burst and the starboard engine caught fire. It dived burning to the ground and exploded. On 9/10 October 435 aircraft attacked Bochum for the loss of four Halifaxes and a Lancaster. All were probably shot down by four crews of NJG1. Hauptmann Schnaufer, Kommandeur of IV./NJG1 reached the historic 100 Abschüsse, dispatching two Viermots south of Bochum and at Bocholt.

Victories by Mosquito night-fighter pilots were as much down to their skilled radar operators as piloting and gunnery skills. Flight Lieutenant Paul Mellows, a pilot on 169 Squadron, who before the war had been studying law at Cambridge, confirms: 'We had a university lecturer, a schoolmaster and Flight Lieutenant S. L. 'Dickie' Drew, my radar operator, who was a chartered accountant. When we teamed up I was just 20 and he was 36 and married with two children. I was teetotal and Dick was virtually the same. He was also colour blind. He could not see poppies in a green field or tell the difference between the green, brown and red snooker balls. This was all right while he was looking at his CRT but it when it came to reading 'Gee' maps with their red and green lines he found he had to dot the red lines in order to differentiate in the cockpit.

'The usual tour for intruders was 35 trips. We were on the point of taking a rest but on 7/8 October we at last came across a Ju 88 on our 35th trip on a Support patrol to Egmond. We arrived in the Patrol area at 2005 hours flying at 15,000 feet. Two beacons flashing 'QC and 'CT' respectively were observed near two airfields fifteen miles to the North so we proceeded to the area to investigate. At 2022 hours 'Dickie' got an AI contact hard port at maximum range, our height being 14,000 feet. I closed to 7,000 feet when the target started making hard urns to port through a number of orbits. It then straightened out and climbed at low IAS and we closed to 100 feet to identify enemy aircraft as Ju 88 vertically above height 18,500 feet in climbing at 140 IAS to attack. We dropped back and I opened fire at 500 feet at 2037 hours. Strikes were observed between the starboard engine and fuselage and the enemy aircraft immediately peeled off to port and visual was lost but contact was held at 10,000 feet range and we closed again losing height to 14,000 feet. Another visual was obtained on the enemy aircraft while in hard starboard turn at 500 feet. It was losing height and turning starboard. However visual could not be held and no further AI contact was obtained on the enemy aircraft, which was inside minimum range. We continued to patrol the area where three aerodromes were now lit, until 2120 hours at heights ranging between 7,000 and 15,000 feet but no further contacts were obtained and we set course for base. Unfortunately, I didn't keep my finger on the button long enough. However this encouraged

us to go on for another fifteen as we were allowed to do.'

Duisburg received a pounding by RAF bombers on 14 October in Operation 'Hurricane' when nearly 9,000 tons of bombs fell on the city in less than 48 hours. According to the directive issued to Sir Arthur Harris, Hurricane's purpose was, 'In order to demonstrate to the enemy in Germany generally the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces in this theatre... the intention is to apply within the shortest practical period the maximum effort of the RAF Bomber Command and the US 8th Bomber Command against objectives in the densely populated Ruhr.' Escorted by RAF fighters just over 1,000 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Mosquitoes raided the city while 1,251 American bombers escorted by 749 fighters hit targets in the Cologne area. At Duisburg 957 RAF heavies dropped 3,574 tons of high explosive and 820 tons of incendiaries for the loss of 13 Lancasters and a Halifax to flak. American casualties were just five bombers and one fighter.

That night, 14/15 October, which was fine and cloudless, 1,005 RAF heavies attacked Duisburg for the second time in 24 hours in two waves and dropped 4,040 tons of high explosive and 500 tons of incendiaries and losing five Lancasters and two Halifaxes. Bomber Support and forces on minor operations had played their part with 141 training aircraft flying a diversionary feint towards Hamburg and turning back before reaching Heligoland and 46 Mosquitoes raiding Hamburg, Berlin, Mannheim and Düsseldorf while 132 aircraft of 100 Group flew RCM, 'Serrate' and 'Intruder' sorties. At 0005 hours on 15 October Flying Officers G. S. Irving and G. M. Millington on 125 Squadron in NF.XVII HK245 took off from Middle Wallop in Hampshire and set course for the Channel Coast. After setting his pilot on course for radio beacon JQ, Millington switched on his Mark X radar. Suddenly, 'Greengrocer,' a fighter control station near Brussels/Melsbroek reported in. It instructed HK245 to set course for radio beacon IP. 'Greengrocer' was a secret night fighter command station in German-occupied territory. Served by trained British agents, the device was a large, portable trunk with foldable DF and transmitter antennas and a gasoline engine which drove a generator. It sent a constant stream of coded pulses into the air. High above in the night sky Millington checked his position - the Morse signal IP was coming in loud and clear. It was a dark night with 6/10 cloud, stratus at 2100 metres, but clear enough at their operational altitude. 'Greengrocer' passed them on to 'Rejoice.' This forward unit accompanied the Mosquito until it reached the reception area of 'Milkway' station. For 45 minutes the British night fighter flew up and down its patrol route. Then, suddenly 'Milkway' reported that it had a second target on its screen, approximately three miles east of the Mosquito. Some miles away the sky was lit by fires from the burning city of Duisburg. Irving put the Mosquito into a turn, made a 360 degree turn and then returned to his course. Then Millington picked up a target on his scope. It was moving rapidly in the direction of Duisburg. After a few minutes it disappeared into a mass of targets - RAF bombers heading home after devastating Duisburg.

At 0220 'Milkway' called out a new bogey at the Mosquito's 11 o'clock position. At a range of 3.5 miles a target appeared on Millington's radar. It was about 2,000 feet above them. Irving made a 180 degree turn and gave chase at

an indicated airspeed of 515 km/hour their quarry was a He 219A-0 of I./NJG1 crewed by Unteroffizier Franz Frankenhauser and Unteroffizier Helmut Biak. The German pilot was obviously experienced, as he constantly changed course by almost 50 degrees and climbed and descended with no discernible pattern. Then Frankenhauser turned back toward Duisburg. Fearing that they would lose this bogey, too, Irving advanced both throttle levers to the gate. The Mosquito's Merlins were now almost in the danger zone. The distance between the two aircraft was about 1,000 metres when suddenly two navigation lights came on, slightly to the east. Acting on this unexpected signal, Irving immediately corrected his course. At maximum speed in a gentle dive, he closed to within 400 metres. The Mosquito was now flying at 612 km/h and was several metres below the German. The 'Owl's white-green exhaust flames were now clearly visible. The crew of the Mosquito thought that it was a Do 217. However, the aircraft's speed was much too great for that. Then the two large crosses on the undersides of the wings became visible. When the extended engine nacelles and twin tails became visible, Millington identified the machine as a He 219. Irving allowed the Mosquito to drop back 750 feet, raised the nose and fired a two-second burst from his four 20 mm cannon. The 'Uhu's starboard DB 603 exploded. A second burst and the fuselage fuel tank caught fire. The Heinkel began to roll over slowly. Another burst exploded the starboard fuel tank. Circling over the stricken enemy machine, the Mosquito crew saw it hit the ground and explode near Münster at 2000 hours. Frankenhauser and Biak ejected but the bordfunker sustained fatal injuries while bailing out. Frankenhauser (and his bordfunker, Unteroffizier Erwin Fabian) were killed on 30 November/1 December after engine failure of their He 219A-2 on approach to Handorf.

Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Bill Skelton DFC* on 85 Squadron in NF.XIX 'Y' claimed two Ju 88Gs at Gütersloh airfield for their 9th and 10th victories. One of these was the Ju 88G-1 piloted by Leutnant Karl-Ernst Hoevermann of Stab III/NJG2 which was shot down at Avenwedde. Hoevermann, who had two victories, was killed. The other was actually a Bf 110 piloted by Stabsfeldwebel Walter Piwarz of 8/NJG2 which was shot down northwest of Gütersloh on his return to the airfield. Piwarz, who had one victory, was killed. Hauptmann Ernst-Karl Schneider belly-landed his burning aircraft on the drome and the crew was rescued. Flight Lieutenant 'Podge' Howard and Flying Officer 'Sticky' Clay on 239 Squadron in a FB.VI shot down a FW 190 at Meland after a considerable dogfight. Unteroffizier Hans Durscheidt of I./NJG10 flying a FW 190 claimed a Mosquito (B.XVI MM184 on 692 Squadron) which failed to return from the raid on Berlin and crashed north of Duisburg.[99] One Halifax of the diversionary force was also lost. One of the five Lancasters that was lost, in Grid Square LN-KN, or the Venlo-Goch area, at 0343 hours, fell victim to Leutnant Arnold Döring, an experienced 27-year old fighter pilot of 7./NJG2 at Volkel aerodrome in Holland flying the Ju 88G-6. It was his twentieth aerial victory. Döring recalls that on the night of 14/15 October: 'Because of the continuing strafing and bombing attacks by Thunderbolts, Mustangs and Lightnings by day and the Mosquitoes by night in mid-October the Gruppe had been split

up and our Staffeln dispersed to several airfields. The Stab and 7th Staffel were now based at Gütersloh, the 8th in Bad Lippspringe and the 9th at Werl. Our operational region was the Ruhr area, where I destroyed a Lancaster over Duisburg.'[100]

Döring was born on 29 January 1918 at Heilsberg in Ostpreussen and joined the Luftwaffe in 1938 as ground staff. After pilot training, he was posted in November 1940 to 9./Kampfgeschwader 53. In the summer of 1942 he was transferred to 8./Kampfgeschwader 55 on the Eastern front. During the fighting at Stalingrad, Döring achieved his first victories when shot down three Russian TB-3 four-engine bombers in one night. He destroyed another six on the ground. During the day he shot down seven MiG-1 and MiG-3 fighters and also flew bombing sorties in the He 111. In summer 1943 Döring completed 348 operational sorties as a bomber pilot in KG53 and KG55, seeing action during the Battles of France and Britain and in the Russian campaign, where he destroyed ten aircraft in the air (including three 4-engined TB-3 bombers over Stalingrad one night) flying a He 111 fitted with extra machine-guns. He claimed a further eight aircraft destroyed as a 'Wild Boar' pilot in JG300 and three more night victories in NJG2 and NJG3. Oberfeldwebel Döring undertook 'Wilde Sau' sorties flying single-engine fighters on night interception sorties against RAF bombers. He achieved his first victory by night on 27/28 September. During his time with II./JG300, he claimed five night and three day victories. In May 1944 he was transferred to 7./NJG2. Two further victories were claimed on the night of 3/4 March 1945 over England during Unnternehmen (Operation) 'Gisela'. On 17 April 1945 he was finally awarded the Knight's Cross.

On the night of 15/16 October I./NJG1 lost another 'Uhu' on successive nights when G9+BH, a A-2 crashed eight kilometres northeast of Bremen following air combat. Oberleutnant Paul Stieghorst and his radio/radar operator Unteroffizier Kurt Frunske went down with the aircraft. On 19/20 October 565 Lancasters and 18 Mosquitoes in two forces 4½ hours apart went to Stuttgart and another night area bombing operation on Nürnberg was carried out by 263 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes. Six Lancasters, five of which were shot down by 'Tame Boar' Nachtjäger, were shot down on the Stuttgart raid. Two more Lancasters were lost on Nürnberg. Success came the way of Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Bill Skelton DFC* of 85 Squadron again. Flying a NF.XIX they added to the two Ju 88Gs they had destroyed at Gütersloh on 14/15 October by shooting down a Ju 188 at Metz for their 11th victory. Warrant Officer P. C. Falconer and Flight Sergeant W. C. Armour on 239 Squadron in a Mosquito FB.VI also shot down a Bf 110 at Strasbourg and two Ju 88s fell to the guns of 141 Squadron. About fifteen miles northwest of Nürnberg a Ju 88 was claimed by Pilot Officer J. C. Barton and Flight Sergeant R. A. Kinnear as 'damaged', which they attacked on three separate occasions. It was confirmed as a victory upon their return to West Raynham when an inspection revealed the leading edge of the Mosquito's starboard spinner and starboard mainplane were extensively covered in oil from their victim while several indentations in the aircraft were found to be caused by flying debris. The second Ju 88 destroyed was by Flight

Lieutenant G. D. 'Charlie' Bates and Flying Officer D. W. Field ten miles southeast of Karlsruhe after a ten-minute chase. Bates gave the Ju 88 a two-second-burst of cannon fire at 300 feet dead astern. After what seemed like 'hours' the enemy aircraft's starboard engine burst into flames and the Ju 88 pulled up in a hard starboard turn. Bates turned hard port and came in to deliver a second attack. However, the Junkers was by now well alight and after firing red and white Very lights, went into a steep dive into cloud. Two seconds later two explosions of great force were seen below: the second one lighting up the whole cloud. Ju 88G-1 2Z+EB of I./NJG6, which crashed at Vaihirgen/Marksdorf ENE of Pforzheim split into three pieces, which were picked up on AI scattering into the night. The pilot, Oberleutnant Wilhelm Engels, was wounded; his bordfunker was safe. On 23/24 February 1945 Engel was again shot down and injured by an intruder, this time whilst coming in to land at Grossachsenheim airfield. His score stood at 18 night and two day victories. On their High Level Support patrol to Nürnberg Squadron Leader Robert Daniel 'Dolly' Doleman and Flight Lieutenant 'Bunny' Bunch DFC on 157 Squadron in a Mosquito NF.XIX shot down a Ju 88 - possibly Ju 88G-1 2Z+CM of 4./NJG6, which crashed at Murrhard southeast of Heilbronn killing Unteroffiziers' Georg Haberer, who had yet to open his score and Ernst Dressel his bordfunker. Doleman also claimed a Ju 88 'damaged'.

On 22/23 October the Main Force was grounded but twenty Lancasters and nineteen Halifaxes dropped mines in the Kattegat.[101] Warrant Officer Les Turner and Flight Sergeant Frank Francis of 169 Squadron who were on a 'Serrate' patrol to Denmark obtained a contact, which was held. After three minutes of hectic dog-fighting range was closed to 2,000 feet where aircraft was identified as a Ju 88 travelling at about 150 mph. They throttled back and put down full flap opening fire at about 400 yards observing large strike on port wing root. The enemy aircraft peeled off to starboard and Turner fired off an ineffective burst which left the Mosquito in an 'awkward position' at about 145 mph (full flap and, being curiously knocked about by slipstream from the Ju 88). Turner and Francis followed down on AI to about 4,000 feet height where contact was lost in ground returns. Though they could only claim a 'damaged' Turner was convinced this aircraft crashed subsequently as there was a fire on the ground ten minutes after the attack. There were no night fighter losses over Denmark this night.

October had signalled a great decrease in the effectiveness of Nachtjagd opposition to the night bomber. This was a combined result of the Allied advance into the continent and the technical and tactical countermeasures employed. The German warning and inland plotting systems were thrown into confusion. Low-level and high-level 'Intruder' played no small part by causing the enemy to plot hostile aircraft over very wide areas as well as forcing him to broadcast frequent warnings of the presence of hostile aircraft to his own fighters. On 7/8 October, in riposte to the enemy R/T communications used in its 'Zahme Sau' operations, Lancasters on 101 Squadron, fitted with 'Airborne Cigar' ('ABC') carried out jamming of the enemy R/T frequencies. These Lancasters also carried a specially trained German-speaking operator. This night the order 'All butterflies go home' was

broadcast of the German night-fighter frequency, resulting in many German night-fighter pilots returning to their airfields! The most outstanding 'Window' success of the month was perhaps on 14/15th when 1,013 heavies went to Duisburg and 200 to Brunswick. It was anticipated that the Duisburg raid, by low approach, radar silence and shallow penetration, would get through with little trouble but that the Brunswick force might be strongly opposed. A 'Window' Force was therefore routed to break off from the Brunswick route and strike at Mannheim. This had success beyond all expectations, for the Brunswick attack was almost ignored because the Mannheim area was anticipated as the main target. Just one bomber from the Brunswick force was lost: Lancaster ME595 on 61 Squadron was shot down by flak at Rieseberg, six kilometres northwest of Koningsbutter, around 0245 hours; there were no claims by Nachtjäger. October also saw the introduction of 'Dina': the jammer used against FuG 220 Lichtenstein SN-2. 'Dina' was installed in the 'Jostle'-fitted Fortresses on 214 Squadron. This was frequently used in the 'Window' force, as were 'Jostle', H_2S and 'Carpet', thereby more effectively giving the simulation of a bombing force. A further realistic effect, also born in October, was created through the co-operation of PFF, which, on several occasions 'Oboe'-marked and bombed the 'Spoof' target. (The 'Window' Force itself had not yet arrived at the bomb-carrying stage.) The noise of 'Oboe', which had until that time always preceded real attacks only, was thought to give still more confusion to the German controller.

Even in broad daylight, Bomber Command was able to operate in relative safety. During October-December 1944 fifteen out of twenty raids on the Ruhr were in daylight. 100 Group's RCM bombers caused further confusion and disruption by its faint raids and jamming of the Luftwaffe's radio traffic and radar and often prevented German night fighters from reaching the bomber streams at all. 100 Group Mosquitoes, which had claimed 257 German aircraft (mainly night-fighters) destroyed by 1945, hunted down the Nachtjagd crews and complimented the offensive by 2nd TAF, ADGB and 8 Group over the continent.

Meanwhile, on 23 October 112 Lancasters bombed battery positions at Flushing (Vlissingen) for the loss of four aircraft. On the night of 23/24 October Bomber Command despatched 1,055 aircraft to Essen to bomb the Krupps works. This was the heaviest raid on the already devastated German city so far in the war and the number of aircraft - 561 Lancasters, 463 Halifaxes and 31 Mosquitoes - was also the greatest to any target since the war began. Altogether the force dropped 4,538 tons of bombs including 509 4,000 pounders on Essen. More than 90% cent of the tonnage carried was high explosive because intelligence estimated that most of Essen's housing and buildings had been destroyed in fire raids in 1943. Five Lancasters and three Halifaxes failed to return from the raid. None were claimed by Nachtjagd. On the night of 24/25 October there was no Main Force activity. Sixty-seven Mosquito bombers visited Hannover and other cities while 25 Lancasters and nine Halifaxes again sowed mines in the Kattegat and off Oslo.

On 2/3 November 992 aircraft went to Düsseldorf. 561 Lancasters, 400 Halifaxes and 31 Mosquitoes supported by 37 RCM sorties and 51 Mosquito

fighter patrols. More than 5,000 houses were destroyed or badly damaged in the Northern half of the city, plus seven industrial premises destroyed and eighteen seriously damaged. This was Bomber Command's last major raid on Düsseldorf. Eleven Halifaxes and eight Lancasters failed to return, four of these aircraft crashing behind Allied lines in France and Belgium. 92 crewmembers were lost, 28 becoming PoWs. Five men evaded and six were hospitalised, one dying later from wounds received.[102] About forty Abschüsse were claimed by the Nachtjagd, an unusual over-claiming by more than 100%! This included a claim for six destroyed and one probable in just twelve minutes south of Düsseldorf by Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm 'Willi' Morlock and his bordfunker, Feldwebel Alfred Soika of 3./NJG1. Morlock was killed two nights later on 4/5 November when Bochum, a heavily industrialized city in the Rhur Valley, with a huge steelworks at its centre and the Dortmund-Ems Canal were the objectives for the Main Force. His He 219A-0 was attacked by a Mosquito and crashed in the Teutoburg Forest near Ibbenbüren. Soika ejected and sustained only minor injuries.

Three Lancasters failed to return from the raid on the Dortmund-Ems Canal and 23 Halifaxes and five Lancasters were missing from the raid on Bochum on 4/5 November. 346 'Groupe Guyenne' Free French Squadron alone lost five of its sixteen Halifaxes. Most of the night's bomber losses were due to Nachtjagd. Hauptmann Hans-Heinz Augenstein of IV./NJG1 claimed three Lancasters destroyed. Oberleutnant Erich Jung of 6./NJG2 claimed two Lancasters shot down north of Essen and Hauptmann Georg Hermann Greiner of IV./NJG1, two Halifaxes west of Essen. Feldwebel Karl Neumann of 8./NJG1 scored his first two kills when he downed two Halifaxes at Duisburg. Hauptmann Heinz Rökker of I./NJG2 was credited with two Lancasters north of Dortmund and two Halifaxes at Geldern for his 41st-44th Abschüsse. Having claimed five Viermots over Normandy on the night of 6/7 June, he had been awarded the Ritterkreuz on 27 July and had recorded his 40th kill on 7/8 August. One of the Lancasters that Rökker claimed on the night of 4/5 November was ME865 on 101 Squadron skippered by Flying Officer Gordon Thomas Weiss RCAF which was lost with all seven crew. The 22-year old special operator Sergeant George Kestern died also. A Polish Jew born in Berlin, Kestern had watched helplessly as his parents were taken away to concentration camp.

Sergeant Albert Norman Gould the wireless operator had written his mother the day before his final raid:

Dear Mother.

How are you and Dad and the Gould family. Fine I hope. I am well although my nerves are a bit shaken after last night's do. It was our 1st real raid and we are still a bit tense after it. I guess you read the papers and saw it was one of the biggest raids yet. It is the most interesting and scaring incident in my 21 years of life. You would have to see it to appreciate what I mean. We could see the target long time before we reached it and the moon was up and we were jittery as they were fighters about. When we turned in and ran over that hell hole I think I aged 10 years. Boy was I glad when we dropped our load and got out of there. When we left I had a look at the target. It was bright as day with all different colours and teary fix fires and flak and searchlights.

It was the most beautiful and awe-inspiring sight I have ever seen. We got back without mishap except for a little piece of flak in our tail. That is one trip now mother and we have 29 to go. We are going on 7 days leave in 5 days time and we expect to have at least 3 in by then. We are definitely going this time. I'm going to London. I have written Aunty Gladys to let her know I was coming. I will send you a card from London when we arrive. We are really looking forward to this leave as this camp life is deadly.

I hope we can get our other trips in very quick. We will be sent home for a while then and that's my chief goal. I didn't finish this afternoon as I have to go to my section. I stopped in at the post office and there were 2 more parcels for me from you. The other parcel of cigarettes from you and your other parcel of food. I sure did need the cigarettes and the food is simply wonderful. The crew and myself send all our thanks. It really wonderful and you could never know how much we and especially myself appreciate it. I see by your letters you had some nice weather in October. The weather over here according to the English has been very bad this year. They say it's not always like this. I have lost my black leather gloves. Could you take some money and buy me a new pair from my bank. You can't buy them over here without coupons.

Well this is all the news for now mother. I am going to close this for now as there is something very important I have to do. Give my love to Dad and the family. I'll be home real soon.

Your loving son, Norm.[103]

Over sixty Mosquitoes flew Bomber Support operations and five 100 Group crews were credited with the destruction of eight German aircraft. Foremost among them with four victories were Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DSO DFC* and Flying Officer 'Bill' Skelton DSO DFC* on 85 Squadron who were credited with three Ju 88s south of Bonn and Hangelar areas and a Bf 110 of 6./NJG1, which crashed into the River Rhine near Hangelar airfield at 2150 hours. Oberleutnant Ernst Runzel who had one victory was killed. Obergefreiter Karl-Heinz Bendfield, bordfunker and the bordschütze both bailed out safely. Flying Officers 'Ginger' Owen and J. S. V. McAllister DFM on 85 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 southeast of Bielefeld. Twenty-two year old Unteroffizier Günther Woehle of 1/NJG2, who had joined the Luftwaffe in 1941, was killed piloting Ju 88G-6 620185 which is believed to have been shot down by an RAF night-fighter at Hardert near Rengsdorf. Unteroffizers Oswald Wagner, Woehle funker and Heinz Schmagold his bordshutze died also. These kills took Burbridge and Skelton's tally to fifteen aircraft destroyed.

A Bf 110 was shot down at Osnabrück by Wing Commander K. H. P. Beauchamp and Pilot Officer Money on 157 Squadron. Two more 110s were destroyed at Bochum by Flying Officers J. N. W. Young and R. H. Siddons on 239 Squadron and Squadron Leader 'Tim' Woodman DFC and Flying Officer Arthur Frederick Witt on 85 Squadron, who destroyed a Bf 110 of 6./NJG1 at 1900 hours at 20,000 feet. Unteroffizier Gustav Sarzio who had five night kills was injured and he bailed out. Unteroffizier Heinrich Conrads, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Roman Talarowski, bordschütze were killed.[104] when their Bf 110G-4 of 8./NJG1 possibly was shot down by Mosquito night fighter, crashed at Bersenbrück, thirty kilometres north of Osnabrück. Feldwebel

'Willi' Ruge, pilot, was wounded and bailed out. Unteroffizier Helmut Kreibohm, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Anton Weiss, bordschütze, were killed.

On 6/7 November when 235 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes again attempted to cut the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst, crews were confronted with a cold front of exceptional violence and ice quickly froze on windscreens. Ten Lancasters failed to return from the Mittelland debacle. Three of these were shot down west of the Rhine in just sixteen minutes by Leutnant Otto Fries and his bordfunker Feldwebel Alfred Staffa of 2./NJG1 flying a He 219. Of 128 Lancasters that raided Koblenz, two failed to return. A Mosquito B.XX on 128 Squadron was lost on Gelsenkirchen. Fortress III HB788 BU-B on 214 Squadron skippered by 21-year old Flying Officer John Malcolm Shand Jackson was lost on a Bomber Support sortie to Braunschweig. All ten crew were killed. Two Mosquito 'Intruders' also failed to return. Flight Lieutenant Thomas Noel Cooper and Flying Officer Kenneth Harding Bonner on 515 Squadron were killed. Flight Lieutenant 'Mickey' Phillips and Flight Lieutenant Derek V. Smith on 85 Squadron (who had destroyed a Ju 188 on 28/29 September) bailed out safely after a British bomber fired on them, setting one engine ablaze and they were finished off by a He 219. 100 Group Mosquito crews claimed five 'probables'. On 151 Squadron Flying Officers Turner and Partridge, described as 'true Australians, completely fearless', shot down Ju 88G-6 R4+TS of 11./NJG3 which crashed southwest of Paderborn. Oberleutnant Josef Förster bailed out safely and he ended the war with sixteen Night-Abschüsse. Feldwebel Werner Moraing, bordfunker and Feldwebel Heinz Wickardt, bordschütze who were wounded, also bailed out safely.[105]

Captain Tarald Weisteen RNWAF on 85 Squadron piloting a Mosquito NF.XIX claimed a Ju 88 as a 'probable'. Hauptmann Karl-Ernst Schneider of Stab NJG3 was the pilot of Ju 88G-6 R4+KR, which crashed at Marienburghausen; one of two aircraft lost. Schneider, who on 14/15 October had been fortunate to survive an attack by a Mosquito at Gütersloh airfield, had yet to score his first victory. Schneider was killed though Oberfeldwebel Mittwoch, bordfunker and Unteroffizier Kaase, bordschütze bailed out safely. On 11/12 November the crew of Unteroffizier Wuttke crashed in bad weather and only the bordfunker escaped death. Unteroffizier Helmut Calgeer and crew of a 3./NJG2 Ju 88G-6, who had claimed a '4-mot' on 4 November, were shot down near Dortmund, probably by Flight Lieutenant 'Jimmy' Mathews DFC and Warrant Officer 'Penny' Penrose on 157 Squadron at Swannington, who claimed a Ju 88 'damaged' at Bonn. The pilot and bordfunker of a Ju 88 of I./NJG4, which crashed near Giessen bailed out safely but Gefreiter Alfred Gräfer the bordshütze was killed. Flying Officers 'Ginger' Owen and Victor McAllister DFM on 85 Squadron shot down a FW 190 thirty miles southeast of Hamburg.

'From mid-November following an order from the powers that be', recalled Leutnant Arnold Döring of 7./NJG2, 'we flew with a crew of four in the narrow cockpit and could hardly move any more. Eight eyes could see more than six and the bordfunker should cover our backs because of the increasing Mosquito threat. From being the hunter we had become the hunted!' Meanwhile, the bombing offensive against German cities and oil targets

continued unabated with raids in November on Homberg, Wanne-Eickel, Harburg, Homberg and Dortmund among others and the Mittelland Canal again on 21/22 November. This time the canal banks were successfully breached near Gravenhorst. Lancasters flying as low as 4,000 feet also breached the Dortmund-Ems Canal near Ladbergen. Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DSO DFC* and Flying Officer 'Bill' Skelton DSO DFC* on 85 Squadron destroyed a Bf 110 ten miles east of Mannheim and a Ju 88 at Bonn airfield. Then on the night of 26/27 November 270 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes went to Munich. One Lancaster crashed in France and one Mosquito Intruder was lost. Thirty-one aircraft were used on Resistance operations and a Special Duty Hudson crashed behind Allied lines in Belgium. Major Werner Husemann, who was awarded the Knight's Cross on 30 September after he was credited with thirty aerial victories had became commander of I./NJG3 in January 1944, was shot down by a Stirling on 161 Special Duty Squadron nine kilometres north of Herning in Denmark when his Ju 88G-6 was hit in the oil cooler. Husemann made a successful moonlight emergency landing and saw out the rest of the war.

As a result of large-scale use of the Mosquito late in 1944, the German night fighter defences were made to change their tactics and this seriously reduced their efficiency. One Geschwader with a strength of about 100 crews, lost, in three months, 24 crews killed, ten missing and fifteen wounded. It was at around this time that the real 'Moskitopanik' started and from then on all the normal run of crashes through natural causes were attributed to the Mosquito. The Mosquito's increased reputation heightened the German night fighter crews' despondency and their demoralization was complete late in 1944 when they had to resort to throwing out Düppel ('Window') as a routine, to mislead and distract the Mosquito night fighters. Few if any of the top German night fighter pilots dared to climb until the last moment and all remained very low or at 'Ritterkreuz Height', as if they flew higher they would never survive to receive the decoration. Hauptmann Hans Krause, Kommandeur of I./NJG4 with 28 destroyed; quoted an instance in the Ruhr when he was intercepted in the target area and pursued for 45 minutes having frequent visuals on a Mosquito as it came into range. He took violent evasive action in azimuth and height and by going through cloud but this failed to shake off the fighter. He finally succeeded in evading only by flying to a district in the Ardennes that he knew really well, flying, as he said, 'Down a valley below the level of the hills.' This confirmed in his mind the exceptional standard of the British AI radar. German night-fighter crews now flew at tree top height to the beacons. This caused many accidents and German night fighters often flew into the ground. An alternative technique of returning to base provided the pilot could go straight in and land was to approach straight from 10,000 feet. When possible, Krause preferred to do this for as he said, 'It had the added advantage that if you were shot down by a Mosquito you had plenty of time to bail out.'

Early on the morning of 28 November Leutnant Kurt Heinz Fischer, a twenty-two-year-old pilot fresh from the night fighter school, took off on a training flight over Westmünsterland in a He 219A-2. Behind him radio/radar operator Unteroffizier Hermann Bauer sat practicing with the radar set.

Approximately thirty minutes earlier a formation of Tempest Vs had taken off from Volkel, Holland on an armed reconnaissance mission. The formation leader, Flight Lieutenant A. F. Moore on 56 Squadron in EJ536 US-B led his aircraft in the direction of Münster. After strafing the barracks in the north of Münster, a worthwhile target appeared in the shape of a passenger train on the Münster-Rheine line. The fighters shot up the train near the town of Sprakel. While the attack was in process, the pilot of one of the RAF fighters sighted Fischer's Heinkel. The fast single-engine Tempests rapidly overhauled the 'Uhu'. By the time Unteroffizier Bauer spotted the British fighters it was already too late. Moore fired burst after burst into the night fighter, which began to burn and lose altitude. Fischer radioed his nearby base that he was under attack and would attempt a forced landing. He set course for a long field, however, while on approach the badly damaged machine suddenly rolled over and crashed into a wood just short of its intended landing place. Bauer ejected, but he died of injuries sustained when he struck the ground. Residents of the village of Reckenfeld who observed the accident attempted a rescue, but they were too late and Fischer died in the flames. Flight Lieutenant Moore had little time to watch the crash, for at the same time, 0835 hours, he spotted another Heinkel. He immediately hauled his Tempest into a turn and with the others attacked the German aircraft. Pieces were seen to fly off the 'Uhu', but it refused to go down. Dwindling fuel forced the British fighters to break off their attack and head for home. Moore claimed the second machine damaged.

On the night of 30 November/1 December 1/NJG1 lost another 'Owl' when a He 219A-2 suffered an engine failure and Unteroffiziers Franz Frankenhauser and Erwin Fabian crashed to their deaths three kilometres east of Senderhorst. Four more 'Owls' crashed in early December and robbed NJG1 of a trio of crews. On 4 December He 219A0-5 crashed at Osthevern killing Oberfeldwebel Manfred Luchmayer and Unteroffizier Heinz Posselt. On the night of 5/6 December an He 219A-2 crashed at Telgte killing Unteroffiziers Werner Wöllenhaupt and Günther Heimesaat. On the night of 14/15 December another He 219A crashed on approach twelve kilometres north of Handorf killing Oberleutnant Wolfgang Tonn and Obergefreiter Joachim Wolff. The fourth He 219 to crash was lost on 17 December when Flight Lieutenants Ross and Shaw on 56 Squadron intercepted the 'Owl' on final approach to Handorf. The Heinkel swung when it touched down on the runway and crashed into a building.

'Moskitopanik' was at its height during December 1944 when 36 German night fighters were shot down. When on 2/3 December 504 bombers were dispatched to Hagen and 66 Mosquitoes to Giessen the operations were supported by 44 RCM sorties and 62 Mosquito patrols of 100 Group. Flight Lieutenant William Taylor and Flying Officer Jeffrey N. Edwards on 157 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88, possibly 3C+WL of 3./NJG4, which crashed a little east of Stagen at 2136 hours. Oberfähnrich Erhard Pfisterhammer, (no victories credited), Unteroffizier Wolfgang Söde, bordfunker and the bordmechaniker were wounded. Captain Tarald Weisteen, a Norwegian on 85 Squadron, claimed a second night-fighter kill after obtaining a contact at five

miles going west across the target area. It was Bf 110G-4 180382 of 12./NJG1 piloted by Leutnant Heinz-Joachim Schläge, who had taken off from Bonninhardt at 2047 hours. Range was closed to 4,000-5,000 feet and at 2,000 feet it was identified as a Bf 110. Weisteen opened fire at 200 yards and portions of the aircraft broke off and the starboard engine caught fire before the Bf 110 spun down to crash at 2145 hours near Lippborg near Hamm. The explosion could be seen through the cloud half a minute later. Schläge survived but Fiebig his bordfunker and Unteroffizier Kundmuller were killed. A Halifax and a Lancaster were lost when they crashed in France and a Mosquito NF.XIII 'Intruder' on 29 Squadron was also missing.[106] Nachtjäger could only claim a Wellington, which Oberleutnant Walter Briegleb of 1./NJG2 shot down north of Baltrum and Oberfeldwebel Herbert Giesecke of 3./NJG3 a Stirling, one of ten on Resistance operations this night. Stirling IV LK143 on 138 Squadron was lost without trace heading for Denmark. Flying Officer George Frederick Nichols and crew were killed. Giesecke, who scored six Abschüsse, flew his Ju 88 from Denmark to Gormanston, Ireland on 8 May 1945 with two other crewmen, Unteroffizier Horst Walter and Obergefreiter Bernhard Kruschyna. The crew were interned and the aircraft was turned over to the RAF.

On the night of 4/5 December there was a 'spoof' on Dortmund while 892 heavies set out for Karlsruhe, Heilbronn, Hagen and Hamm in the north and south of the Ruhr. The spoof Force of 112 aircraft of 100 Group went straight into 'Happy Valley' supported by PFF marking and not less than 90-100 German night fighters were sent to the spoof. They waited in the area for about fifteen minutes for the attack to start. However, they found nothing but high intruders and they were too late for their deployment against the heavies. Losses to the Main Force were fifteen aircraft or 1.5 per cent of the force. A handful of Nachtjäger from NJG6 and NJG11 engaged the bomber stream on their run in to the target at Heilbronn and shot down twelve Lancasters. 100 Group Mosquito night-fighters equipped with AI shot down five and probably destroyed another. A Bf 110 of IV./NJG1 was shot down by a Mosquito night fighter southwest of Wezel and crashed at Sevelen. Twenty-six year old Leutnant Heinz Rolland, who had nine Abschüsse, 25-year old Feldwebel Heinz Krüger, bordfunker and 22-year old Unteroffizier Karl Berger, bordschütze were killed. Two 85 Squadron crews, 23-year old Flight Lieutenant Richard Tannatt 'Dickie' Goucher and 33-year old Flight Lieutenant Charles Howard 'Tiny' Bulloch who had crewed up in North Africa in 1943 and Flying Officers 'Ginger' Owen and J. S. Victor McAllister DFM destroyed two Bf 110s at Germesheim and a Ju 88 (probably Ju 88G-1 of 6./NJG4) near Krefeld respectively. Owen's was 85 Squadron's 100th victory. Unteroffizier Wilhelm Schlutter, who had no victories, was wounded; Unteroffizier Friedrich Heerwagen, bordfunker and Gefreiter Friedrich Herbeck, bordschütze were killed. Meanwhile, in the Karlsruhe area Captain Svein Heglund DFC*[107] and Flying Officer Robert O. Symon on 85 Squadron obtained contacts on bombers and later two targets, with violent evasion, which were chased eastwards. At 2005, Schwabish Hall airfield was seen lit and several fleeting contacts appeared well below. The Norwegian pilot, whom Symon described as 'a delightful and modest young man' went down to 2,500 feet to investigate but

all lighting was doused. The Mosquito regained height and at 2015 hours NE of Heilbronn, Symon obtained a contact. Recognising it as a Bf 110 Heglund fired a one-second burst, pumping just forty rounds into the German machine and obtaining strikes immediately on the starboard engine and wing root. The Luftwaffe aircraft burst into flames and side-slipped into the ground and exploded. Heglund and Symon set course for base via the Frankfurt area where several airfields were seen active but their fuel was low and Heglund had to put down at Brussels before they could return to their base at Swannington in Norfolk.

On 5/6 December when Bomber Command sent 497 aircraft to Soest, 53 Mosquitoes went to Ludwigshafen, 32 to Nürnberg and four to Duisburg, only two Halifaxes were lost. Reports were that: 'There was probably no fighter reaction. Only a few contacts were obtained. This was probably due to adverse weather conditions over enemy airfields.' If there was no 'trade' to be found then the Nachtjagd bases had to contend with Mosquito 'Intruder' attacks and that night forty Mosquitoes of 100 Group alone were despatched.

Despite the declining effectiveness of Nachtjagd during late 1944, an all-time record of 2,216 aircraft destroyed was claimed that year. Luftflotte Reich had 905 operational night-fighter aircraft on 17 November but losses in air combat, in ground attacks and in accidents rose steeply and 114 aircraft were destroyed during November-December. During December Nachtjagd flew 1,070 sorties, which resulted in 66 victories or 0.7 per cent

Nachtjag Airfields
late 1944
SKAGERRAK
KATTEGAT
NORTH SEA
BALTIC SEA
Copenhagen
Berlin
Prague
Warsaw
Brünn
Vienna
Danzig
Grove IV/NJG 2
II/NJG 3
Haderslev
Kdo III/NJG 3
Westerland
III/NJG 3
Schleswig 1/NJG 3
Lübeck III/NJG 5
Wittmundhaven
Kdo IV/NJG 3
Nordholtz Kdo 1/NJG 3
Stade Stab/NJG 3
Varel Kdo IV
Marx IV/NJG 3
Fassberg I/NJG II
Lüneburg
Kdo III/NJG 5
Twente Kdo 3/NJG II
Münster 1/NJG 1
Gütersloh III/NJG 2
Paderborn Stab/NJG 1
Kdo II/NJG I
Störmede Kdo IV/NJG 1
Dortmund IV/NJG 1
Kassel I/NJG 2
Frilzar III/NJG 1
Cologne Stab/NJG2
II/NJG 2
Giessen Kdo III/NJG 1
Bonn I/NJGr 10, 3/NJG II
Niedermendig
2/NJG 1
Langendiebach I/NJG 4
Ebelsbach III/NJG 4
Rhein-Main
Stab/NJG 4
IV/NJG 4
Kitzingen III/NJG 101
Mainz II/NJG 4
Darmstadt Kdo 1/NJG 4
Stab 2/NJG II
Schwäbisch Hall II/NJG 6, IV/NJG 6
Ingoldstadt I/NJG 101
Schleissheim Stab/NJG 6
Strasbourg
Finow 3/NJG 101
Werneuchen NJGr 10
Jüterbog 3/NJGr 10
10/Jg 300
Schönfeld II/NJG 102
Powunden IV NJG 5
Jesau 1/NJG 5
Stab/NJG 5
Praust 10/MJG 5
Prowehren 1/NJG 100
4/NJG 100
Gross Schiemanen
Schwarm 4/NJG 100
Hohensalza 1/NJG 100
Oels 1/NJG 102
Breslau-Udetfeld
2/NJG 100
Stubendorf II/NJG 5
III/NJG 102
Malacki II/NJG 100
Parndorf II/NJG 101
Steinamanger III/NJG 6
SCALE:
0 100 miles
0 100 kilometreds

Right: P/O Edwin Albert Canty RAAF's Lancaster crew on 44 Squadron. Left to right, back row: Sgt Ernest George Scott, MUG from Nottinghamshire; Sgt Ronald Edgar Clay, flight engineer from Devon, Sgt Eric Norris, bomb aimer from Lancashire; Sgt D. J. MacDonald RCAF, rear gunner. Front row: Flying Officer Walter Marshall Crook wireless operator from Lancashire; P/O Edwin Albert Canty RAAF; F/O John Reuben Vowles RAAF, navigator from South Australia. This crew, except for MacDonald, were lost on 22 June 1944 on Wesseling. (D. Gollan)

Left: W/C John Raeburn Balmer OBE DFC RAAF (right) Commanding Officer of 467 Squadron with another officer after an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace, November 1943.

Below: All-sergeant crew of 'K-Kitty' on 458 Squadron RAAF. Identified, left to right: James Howard 'Rupe' Holmes, captain, of Brisbane; Sven Ivanouw Hansen, 2nd pilot of Brisbane; Les H Empson, front gunner; Robert McKerlie 'Bob' Croft, rear gunner of Adelaide, South Australia; probably Norman Henry Kobelke, observer of Brisbane, (originally of Bulawayo, Rhodesia); Ken A Cousins, wireless operator. On the night of 10/11 May 1944 F/O Croft and the rest of S/L M. Powell DFC RAAF s crew on 463 Squadron RAAF were killed when Lancaster LL882 was shot down by a night fighter on the raid on the marshalling yards at Lille. (Australian War Memorial)

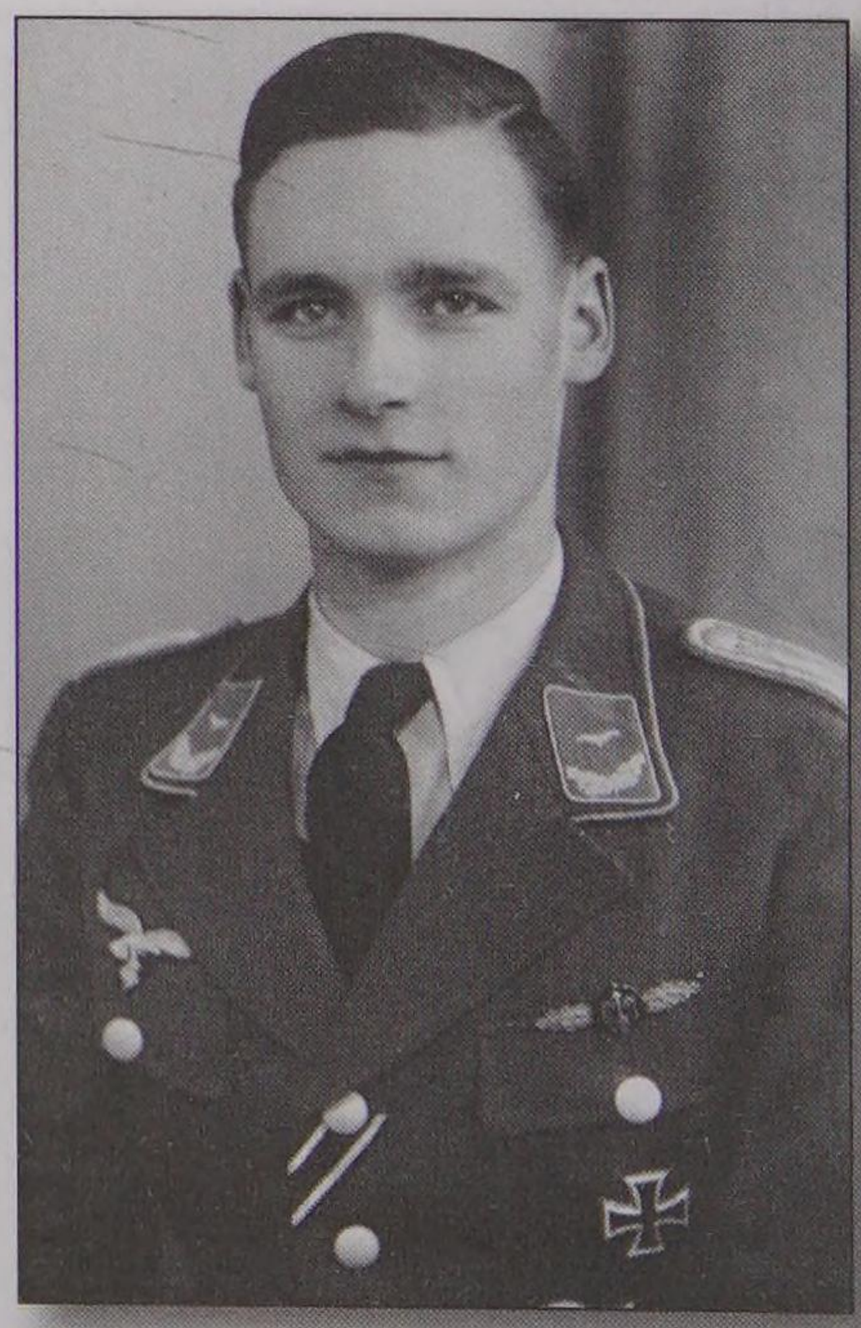
Top Left: Heinz Strüning, Staffelkapitän 3./NJG1.

Top Right: Twenty-six year old Hauptmann Martin Drewes of 11./NJG1, one of Germany's foremost 'Experten'.

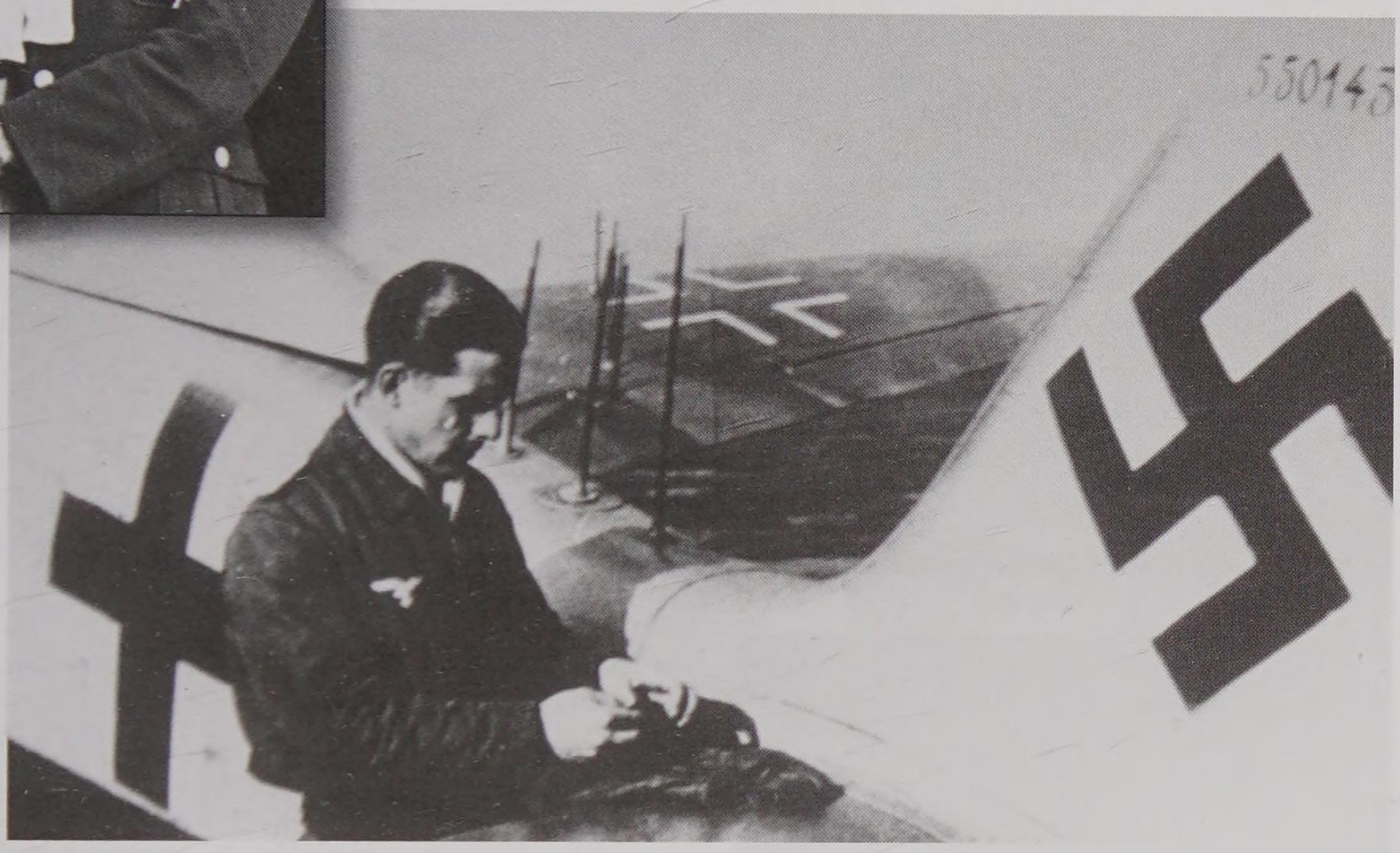
Below, Left: Major Paul Semrau of II,/NJG2.

Right: Oberfeldwebel Reinhard Kollak of 8./NJG4.

Below right: Leutnant Rolf Ebhardt of 8./NJG1.

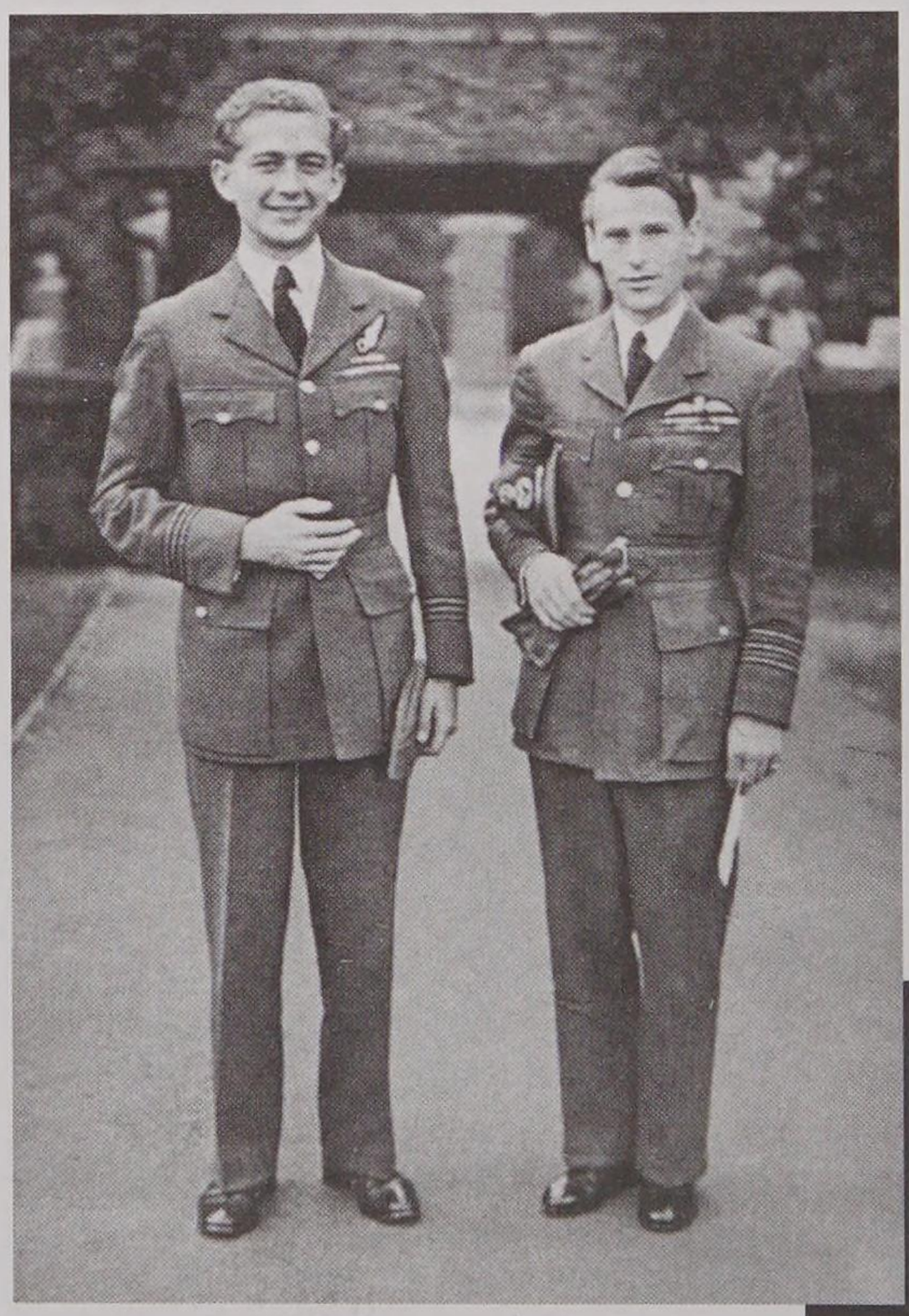


In mid-1944 Oberleutnant Fritz Krause (below) was a Staffel kapitän in the experimental I/NJGr.10 commanded by Hauptmann Friedrich Karl 'Felix or 'Nasen' (Nose) Müller (top left) which operated FW 190As and Bf 109Gs with AI radar and a long-range fuel tank for 'Wild Sau' sorties against Mosquitoes of the LNSF. Hauptmann Fritz Krause survived the war, scoring six Abschüsse. (via Hans-Peter Dabrowski)



Below: Doktor Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, inspecting war damage.

Above: Halifax MZ511 skippered by F/L Alastair Tennant Hope-Robinson (KIA) which was one of six aircraft lost on 578 Squadron on Bottrop on 27 July 1944 when it was shot down by Hauptmann Martin Drewes of III/NJGI using 'Fiensburg-Cerat' to home in on the bombers 'Monica' signal.



Left: S/L Branse Burbridge DSO* DFC* (right) and F/L Bill Skelton DSO* DFC* on 85 Squadron who finished the war as the top scoring night fighter team in the RAF, with 21 aircraft destroyed, two probables, one damaged and three V1s also destroyed.

Below: On 4/5 November 1944 S/L Branse Burbridge and F/L Bill Skelton shot down three Ju 88s and this Bf 110 of 6./NJG1 north of Hangelar airfield, killing pilot Oblt Ernst Runzel. Obergefreiter Karl-Heinz Bendfeld (WIA) and the gunner bailed out safely. (IWM)

Left: Hauptmann Werner Husemann of Stab 1./NJG3 (3rd from left).

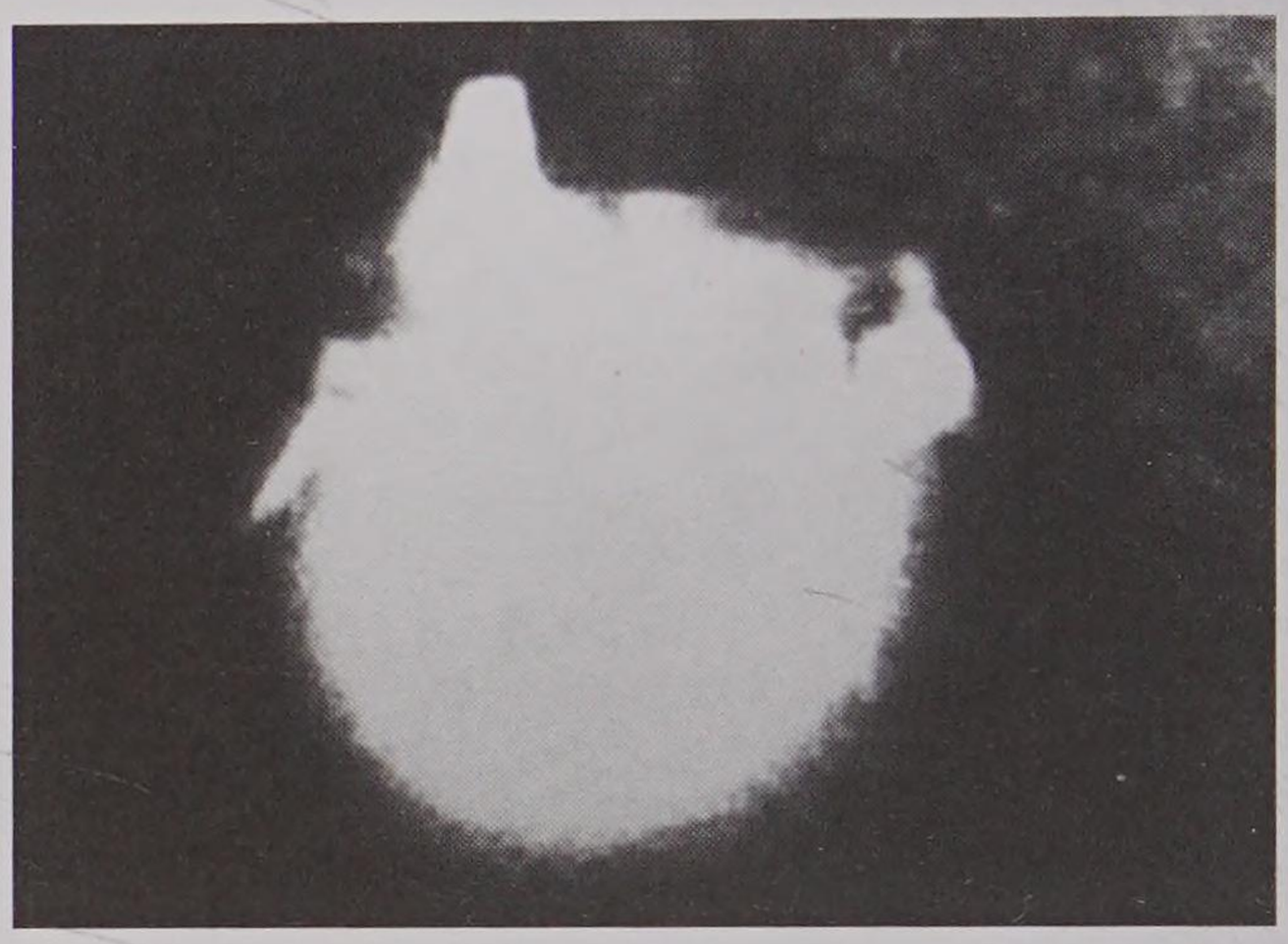
Centre, left: Hauptmann Hans Autenrieth, Staffelkapitän of 6./NJG4.

Right: Leutnant Johannes Strassner of 2,/NJG2.

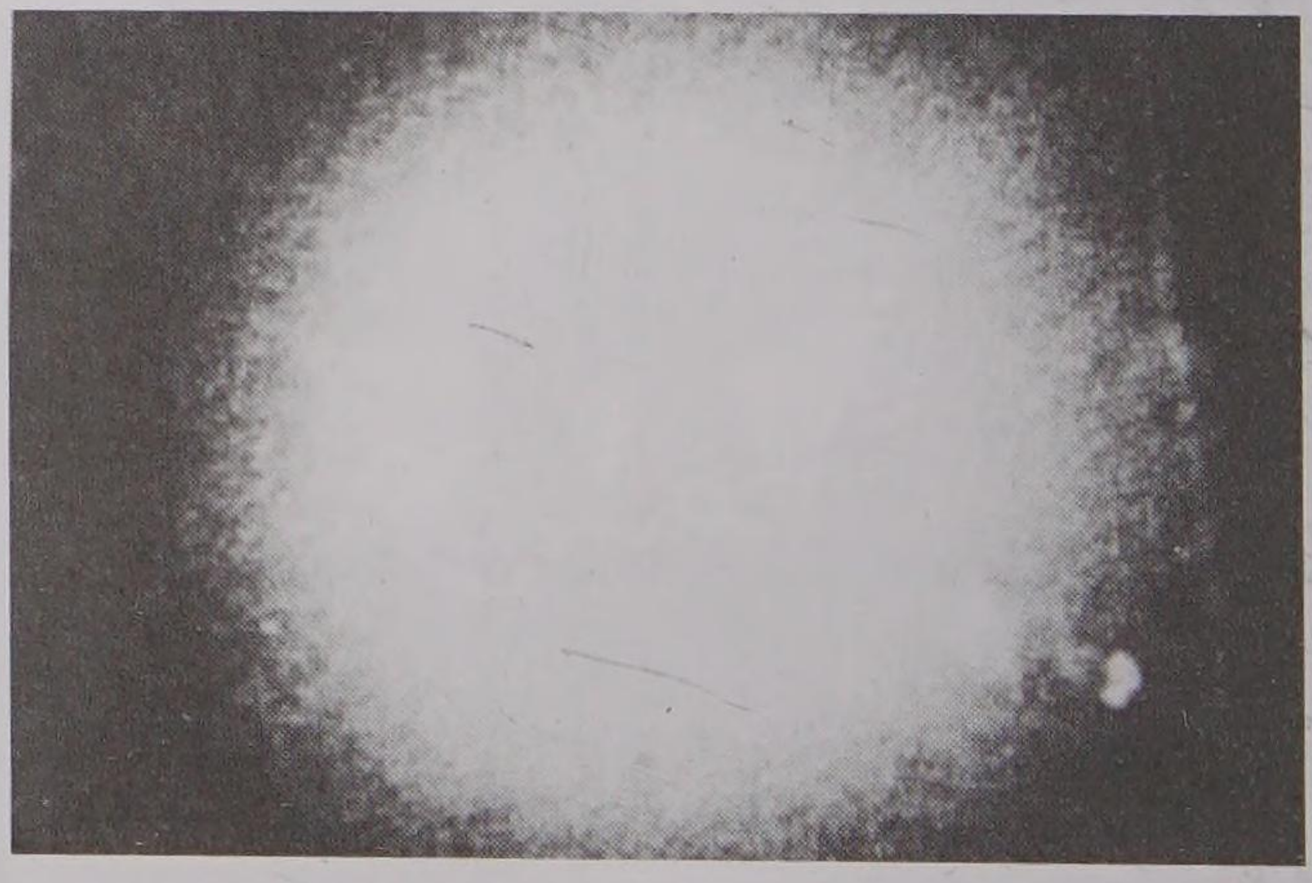
Below, right: Oberstleutnant Werner Streib, the Inspector of Night Fighters.

Camera gun frame showing the last moments of a Dornier Do 217 shot down 6 miles N of Prague-Ruzyne, Czechoslovakia on 24/25 April 1945 by W/C Howard C. Kelsey DFC* CO 515 Squadron and F/L E. M. Smith DFC·DFM on Mosquito VI RS575/C. Kelsey and Smith therefore had the distinction of scoring 100 Group's first and last victories of the war. It took Kelsey's overall score to 8 destroyed, 1 probable, 2 damaged and 3 destroyed on the ground. (Tom Cushing Collection)

The instant a Bf 110 probably 730370 2Z+EL of 3./NJG6, flown by Oblt Willy Rathmann, fell victim near Stuttgart to the guns of F/L Paul Mellows flying Mosquito NF.XXX NT252 with F/L 'Dickie' Drew as his radar operator on the night of 1/2 February 1945. The Bf 110 crashed 25 kilometres south of Stuttgart. Rathmann (no victories, Feldwebel Erich Berndt, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Alfred Obry, Bordschütze, were KIA. (Paul Mellows)



On 16/17 January 1945 F/L Kenneth D. Vaughan and F/Sgt Robert Denison MacKinnon on 85 Squadron in Mosquito NF.XXX NT334/S destroyed a He 219 'Owl' of 2./NJG1 flown by Leutnant Otto Fries (left) . Fries and his Bordfunker Feldwebel Alfred Staffa survived when they ejected from their doomed aircraft. On 19/20 May 1944 they were the second aircrew ever to eject under combat conditions after their He 219 suffered an in-flight engine fire. (The first to use ejection seats in combat were Unteroffizier Herter and Gefr Perbix of 2./NJG1, who ejected from their He 219 on 11 April 1944. They each received 1000 Reichmark from Prof Dr. Heinkel.) (K. D. Vaughan)



Top Right: Hauptmann Gerhard Raht, 58 Nachtjagd victories (all but one Viermots) in 171 sorties with NJG2 and NJG3.

Top Left: Hauptmann Alfons Köster who had 25 night victories and one day kill was killed when he crashed into a farm house on landing near Varel/Oldenburg in heavy fog on 6/7 January 1945.

Below left: Oblt Peter Spoden of 6./NJG6.

Right: Major Rudolf Schönert, Kommodore of NJG5. On 27 April 1945 an electrical fault rendered Schönert's radar unserviceable on his Ju 88G and he was shot down by a Mosquito. On 24/25 April he had shot down four Russian bombers east of Berlin for his 62nd-65th victories. Schönert and his crew all bailed out safely and were rescued by German troops.

Below, right: Hauptmann Paul Szameitat, Kommandeur of I./NJG3, 28 night and one day victories.

Right: F/L Paul Mellows DFC and his bride Jean on their wedding day in 1946. Jean's own father was missing in action after being torpedoed in the Atlantic. Only later was it confirmed he had died. On New Year's Eve Mellows and 'Dickie' Drew shot down Oblt Heinz Oloff, Staffel-kapitän of 3./NJG1 who was flying a He 219A-2. On the night of 1/2 February 1945 Mellows and Drew destroyed a Bf 110 flown by Stabsfeldwebel Paul Faden of 2/NJG6.

Below: Lancaster ME326 'P for Peter', 'B' Flight, 460 Squadron RAAF enjoying a drink together. Australian crew members present: F/Sgt William Alexander Cunningham RAAF, wireless operator; P/O Norman Wade Everett RAAF, navigator; F/O John Maguire RAAF, skipper; W/O Donald Bernard May RAAF, wireless operator; P/O Donald Anderson 'Don' Goudie and British navigator Eric Richer (bottom right). Most of this crew, including Cunningham, Everett, Maguire and May were killed in a mid-air collision at 19,000 feet with Lancaster PD286 on 626 Squadron over Wiesbaden on 2 February 1945. Both aircraft crashed at St-Maxent Somme, 8 km south west of Abbeville. G/C K. R. J. Parsons survived, but the rest of the crew, including F/S Frederick Human who succumbed to his injuries, are buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery.

Above: Oberfeldwebel Günther Bähr, 35 night and two day victories in SKG210, NJG1, NJG4 and 1./NJG6.

Left: Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler of 1./NJG5.

Right: Oberführer Helmut Bunje of 4./NJG6.

Below left: Oblt Wilhelm 'Wim' Johnen, Staffelkapitän, 5/NJG1.

Below, right: Hauptmann Hans-Heinz Augenstein of IV./NJG1.

Top: Fortress III KJ106 BU-G and F/O George Stewart RNZAF's crew on 214 Squadron which FTR from a 'Jostle' patrol in support of a bombing raid on Hamburg on 7 March 1945. Stewart and four crew were killed and five were taken prisoner. Officially the loss was caused by flak; another source states that it was a night-fighter and yet another, that they were shot down by a Lancaster.

Right: F/L Allan John Rate RAAF, pilot of 462 Squadron RAAF who was killed on operations on 24 February 1945.

Below: Ground crew at Foulsham, Norfolk working on a 462 Squadron RAAF Halifax in December 1944.

Above: Oblt Walter Barte, Staffelkapitän 4.NJG/1 (centre), his bordfunker, Uffz Pieper (right) and another crewmember, at St. Trond. Barte survived the war with 19 night Abschüsse and four day kills in NJG1 and NJG3. (via Peter Loncke)

Right: Major Herbert Lütje of Stab NJG6.

Below: Major Berthold 'Petz' ('Sneak') Ney, Kommandeur, Stab IV./NJG3 at Jever in 1945.

Above: The crew of Lancaster PB471 AR-F2 on 460 Squadron RAAF. From left, standing: F/O Bernard Maxwell Clegg, wireless operator, F/Sgt Bryant 'Buster' Braddock, mid upper gunner, of WA; F/O Sydney Clifton 'Syd' Swift, navigator. Kneeling from left: F/L Alexander Elliott 'Alex' Jenkins, pilot; F/Sgt Frank Stone flight engineer; F/Sgt Alan Graham rear gunner; F/Sgt Herbert Thomas 'Bert' Campbell, bomb aimer. In February 1945 returning from a raid on Dortmund this aircraft and crew were shot down over Belgium by night fighters. Jenkins was the only survivor.

Left: Leutnant Arnold Döring, whose 13 night victories and ten day victories included a 'Lancaster' and a Fortress over England during Operation 'Gisela' on 3/4 March 1945. His 'Lancaster' victim was actually Halifax III HX332 ZA-V on 10 Squadron flown by F/L J. G. L. Laffoley RCAF. Laffoley and three of his crew were killed and three others were critically injured. Döring was recommended for the Knights Cross only days before the final collapse of the Third Reich but he never received it. Twenty years later the documents were found and Döring was awarded his decoration.

Top: S/L Johnny Wynne DFC's crew on 214 Squadron outside Blickling Hall photographed by the navigator F/O Dudley Percy Heal DFM (PoW 10/11 April 1945). F/O James William Vinall (40) DFM RAFVR twice MiD flight engineer, (far right), (killed), husband of Laurie Evelyn Vinall, of Rottingdean, Sussex. F/O Harold 'Jack' Frost DFM MiD RAFVR (24), top turret gunner, (killed), husband of Marjorie Francis Frost of Liverpool. F/O Gordon Albert Hall MiD RAFVR (22), wireless operator (killed). F/Sgt Edward Arthur Percival DFM RAFVR (30) waist gunner, (killed). F/L G. P. 'Tubby' Pow DFC bomb aimer (PoW). F/L Tom H. Tate, Special Operator (PoW). F/S Norman J. Bradley DFM, waist gunner (PoW). F/L Sydney Clayden Matthews DFC MiD RAFVR (25), rear gunner (killed). Those killed were murdered in cold blood after capture.

Left: F/O Alfred Desmond John Ball, 462 Squadron RAAF of Perth, Western Australia who was KIA on the night of 10/11 April 1945 on Leipzig when his Halifax (NA240), one of ten aircraft which took off from Foulsham at 1910 hours to carry out a protective patrol with the Main Force, failed to return. (Australian War Memorial)

Right: F/O Gordon Albert Hall MiD RAFVR (22), wireless operator (killed 10/11 April 1945), husband of Cornelia Hall, of Caerau, Glamorgan.

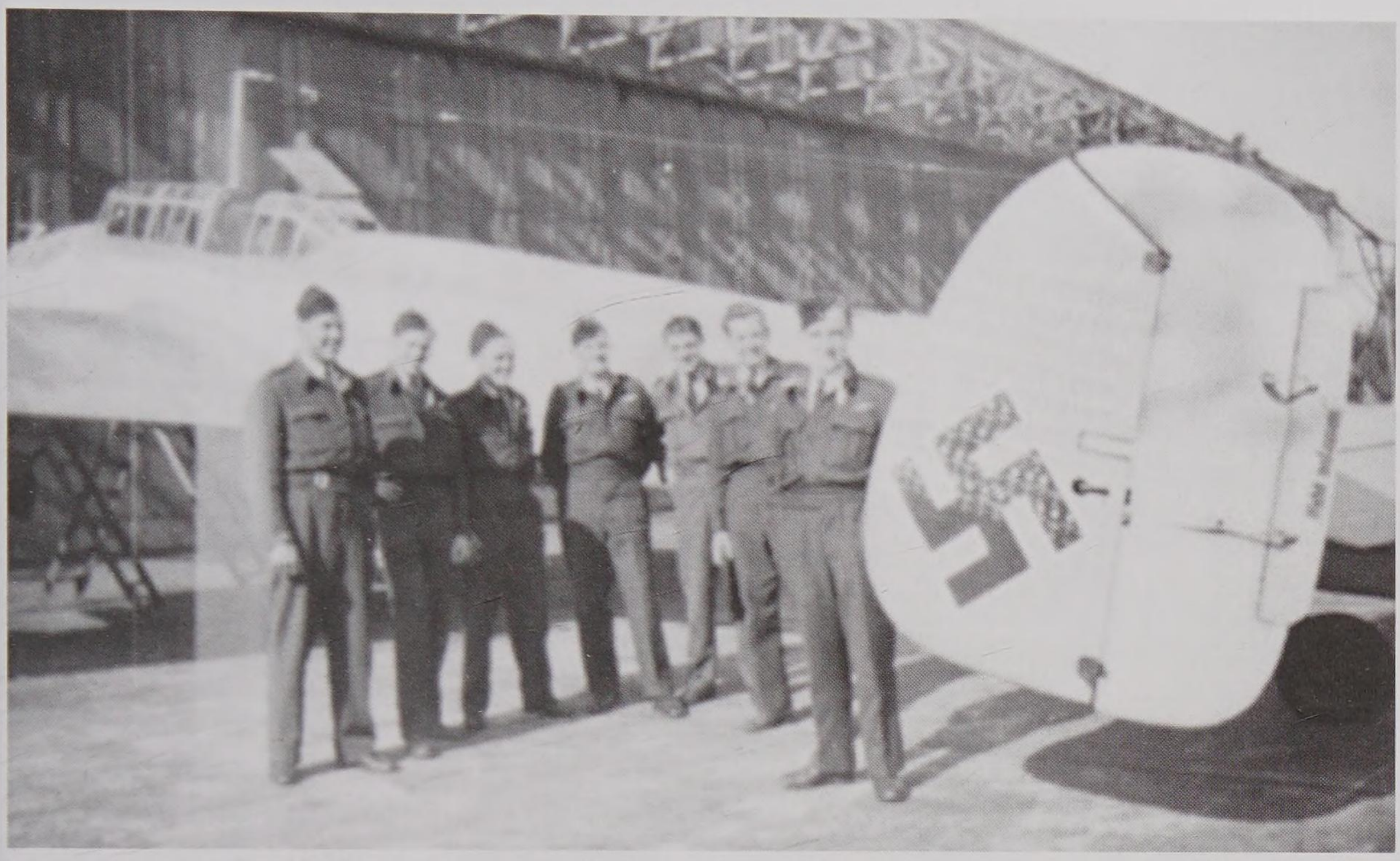
Left: F/Sgt Edward Arthur Percival DFM RAFVR (30) waist gunner, husband of Maud Lilian Percival, of Barking, Essex, (killed 10/11 April 1945).

Right: F/L Sydney Clayden Matthews DFC MiD RAFVR (25), rear gunner, husband of Iris Matthews of Canons Park, Edgware, Middlesex, (killed 10/11 April 1945).

Left: Four members on 466 Squadron RAAF. Left to right, back row: F/O Patrick Joseph Hogan, of Perth, Western Australia; F/Sgt Gregory Wills Dixon (20) of Sydney, NSW. Front row: F/O Alan Percy William Shelton (20) of Melbourne and F/O Johnson (24). All except for Hogan were killed on 4 March 1945 by German night fighters operating over England. (Australian War Memorial)

Right: F/O Allan Morris Lodder, skipper of Halifax MZ467 on 462 Squadron RAAF which was shot down on 16/17 April 1945. Of the eight crew members only Lodder, F/Sgt Naylor and Sgt Casterton survived to become PoWs. (Australian War Memorial)

Below: Crew on 462 Squadron RAAF at Foulsham 1945. L-R: F/Sgt McNish (specialist operator in the crew for this flight to dispense 'Window'), F/Sgt Frank Hughes, rear gunner; W/O John Sibbald, wireless operator; W/O Harry Brown, bomb aimer; F/Sgt John J. O'Donoghue, mid-upper gunner; Sgt Jim Bowden, engineer. (Australian War Memorial)



Above: Members of the Royal Australian Air Force pose with Schnaufer's Bf 110G-4 (G9+BA) at Schleswig, Germany, shortly after the end of the war, on 19 June 1945.

Left: Lancaster III PB666 on 227 Squadron which was shot down on the raid on Gravenhorst by Heinz Wolfgang Schnaufer on 21/22 February 1945. F/O Peter Isaac Green RAFVR the 21-year old pilot and Sgt H. R. Piper and Sgt F. G. Edwards were killed. The four others on the crew were taken into captivity.

left: Feldwebel Bruno Rupp of 4./NJG3.

Right: Oblt Kurt Welter, 56 Nachtjagd victories. in JG301, 300, NJG10 and NJG11 (including 11 Mosquitoes) plus seven day victories in 93 sorties.

On 11 March 1945 three Lancasters were lost on the daylight operation on Essen, the second largest bombing attack of the war. Lancaster X KB853 on 431 'Iroquois' Squadron at Croft, piloted by 32-year old W/C Ralph Frederick Davenport RCAF and NG201 P4-T on 153 Squadron flown by F/O Eric William Gibbins whose crew were on their 26th operation, crashed in the target area with the loss of their crews. Gibbins' Lancaster was probably hit by a falling 4,000lb Cookie from another aircraft. Lancaster X KB834 on 434 'Bluenose' Squadron RCAF skippered by 25-year old F/L John Fern of Christopher Lake, Saskatchewan was hit by flak while at 21,300 feet and crashed seconds after completing the bomb run. In the bomb bay was a 4,000lb bomb, 3 HE 1,000lb bombs and six SBCs (Small Bomb Canisters) filled with either 236 4lb or 24 30lb incendiaries. Bomb aimer Tom Copeland released the bomb load and approximately 33 seconds later they struck the rail yard areas. Copeland then requested Fern to 'Keep a straight course' as he wanted to 'take a good picture'. Right after this the Lancaster was likely hit by a 88mm shell and the explosion instantly killed all but the 24-year old rear gunner, F/O Ben Marceau RCAF of Montreal, Quebec. The Lancaster plunged on fire within seconds into the target area and crashed near Essen Margaretenhohe with wreckage spread over a two mile area. The shell that hit KB834 also blew out all of the cockpit windows of the trailing Lancaster that was following about 100 feet behind and 50 feet above. KB834's crew was on their fifth operation and their third in a row in KB834.

of all Bomber Command night bomber sorties but one of Nachtjagd's favourite sons was lost.

On 6 December a very severe ground frost heralded a bright and clear morning and all anticipation was for a maximum effort. In eastern England 1,831 Main Force bombers supported by 37 RCM sorties and 47 Mosquito fighter patrols were detailed to attack Osnabrück and Giessen and Leuna in eastern Germany. Though the weather conditions were not good for low-level operations the Mosquito 'Intruders' carried out bombing and strafing of Luftwaffe airfields with their usual fervour. At Dortmund shortly after the weather briefing the first incoming aircraft were reported. The Fourth Gruppe of NJG1 at Münster-Handorf went to immediate readiness at 1830 hours, which shortly after was called off. Around 1900 hours they went to immediate readiness again and the first long range Mosquito night intruders arrived over the airfield.

Hauptmann Hans-Heinz Augenstein's Bf 110G-4, which crashed ten kilometres northwest of Münster-Handorf was probably shot down by Flight Lieutenant Edward Richard Hedgecoe DFC and Flight Sergeant J. R. Whitham who were attached to 85 Squadron at Swannington from the Fighter Interception Unit (FIU) at Ford in a Mosquito NF.XXX. (It is remotely possible that the Messerschmitt was shot down by a RAF Fortress gunner, Flying Officer Corke on 214 Squadron while on a 'Jostle' patrol, who claimed a Ju 88 as 'damaged'. Augenstein's body was not found until three days' later, in a ditch with his parachute unopened. Unteroffizier Kurt Schmidt, his bordshütze survived. Feldwebel Günther Steins the bordfunker was killed. Altogether, 100 Group Mosquitoes claimed five German night fighters on 6/7 December. Flight Lieutenant 'Jimmy' Mathews DFC and Warrant Officer 'Penny' Penrose DFC on 157 Squadron destroyed a Bf 110 and a Ju 88, the latter crashing near Giessen killing the bordmeckaniker, Gefreiter Alfred Gräfer. In the Kitzingen area 'Dolly' Doleman and 'Bunny' Bunch DFC on 157 Squadron identified a Bf 110 and shot it down at 2040 hours. The Main Force lost 21 of their number. Nachtjäger claimed 14-19 Viermots.

On a night of minor operations on 9/10 December when 72 Mosquito bombers visted Berlin, Koblenz and an oil plant at Meiderich (Duisburg) Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach of 4./NJG11 claimed a Mosquito near Berlin but the sixty Mosquitoes that attacked the 'Big City' returned without loss. Two nights later on 11/12 December 89 Mosquitoes went to various city targets and one Mosquito failed to return. XVI MM190 on 128 Squadron which was lost on Hamburg was claimed by Oberleutnant Kurt Welter of II./NJG11. Flight Lieutenant Ronald Charles Onley and 19-year old Flying Officer George Barrowby Collins RAAF, son of George and Lucy Gwendoline Collins of Mahogany Creek, Western Australia were killed.

On the night of 12/13 December when 540 aircraft attacked Essen Unteroffizier Scherl of 8./NJG1 claimed a Mosquito east of Hagen but though six Lancasters were lost, all 28 Mosquitoes that attacked Essen and 49 others that raided Osnabrück returned safely. (The only Mosquito lost was a 306 Squadron NF.XXX that was hit by a V2 in mid air during an 'Intruder' patrol! Warrant Officers' S. Wieczorek and H. Ostrowski belly-landed at Hunsdon).

Unteroffizier Rudolf Wilsch of 9/NJG1, who had one victory was wounded piloting a Bf 110 which was shot down by an 'Intruder' at Kaiserwerth. Two claims for Bf 110s were submitted by Flight Lieutenant Edward Hedgecoe DFC and Sergeant J. R. Whitham of the FIU for Hedgecoe's ninth and final victory.[108] Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DSO* DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Bill Skelton DSO* DFC* on 85 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 and a Bf 110 to take their score to nineteen. Burbridge was relieved to see at least one parachute leave the Ju 88G-1 before it heeled over and dive down enveloped in flames and crash at Gütersloh airfield. Unteroffiziers Heinrich Brune, Emil Hoffharth, bordfunker and Wolfgang Rautert, bordschütze of 6./NJG4 were killed. Flying towards Essen another contact was obtained at four miles and 12,000 feet and they dashed towards the target area at high speed and climbing. Luckily, a burst of flak illuminated a Bf 110 and Burbridge closed to 400 feet for final identification. He gave the Bf 110 a half-second burst from 500 feet and the Nachtjagd aircraft exploded before spinning down in flames, the tail unit breaking off. It crashed about two miles west of Essen.

When the thirteenth day of December broke it was under a very heavy frost and towards mid-morning thick fog enveloped stations in Norfolk and operations were scrubbed very early. That night 52 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes flew to Norway to attack the German cruiser *Köln* but by the time they reached Oslo Fiord, the ship had sailed so instead other ships were bombed. On 15/16 December 327 Lancasters and Mosquitoes raided Ludwigshafen for one Lancaster lost. Two nights later, on 17/18 December, 96 aircraft in 100 Group, including a 'Spoof' raid by four Mosquitoes of 141 Squadron on Mannheim, supported a massive operation by 1,174 aircraft, which bombed Ülm, München, Duisburg, Hanau, Münster and Hallendorf. Two 'Tame Boar' Nachtjäger of NJG5 and NJG6 each destroyed a Lancaster over Ülm. Three Halifaxes of the Duisburg force were shot down by three crews of 4./NJG1 and Hauptmann Fritz Lau and Unteroffizier Reinecke of 4./NJG1 each claimed a Mosquito Abschuss. This probably was NF.XIII HK529 on 29 Squadron, which was on an 'Intruder' over Germany. Flight Lieutenant N. R. Schwartz and Sergeant R. W. Donaldson were killed. In reply three German night-fighters were claimed destroyed by Mosquito crews on 85 and 157 Squadrons. Warrant Officer D. A. Taylor and Flight Sergeant Radford on 157 Squadron in NF.XIX MM627/H shot down He 219A-2 G9+WL of 3./NJG1 flown by Leutnant Jürgen Prietze and Unteroffizier Frithjof Haake, both of whom were killed in air combat two kilometres southeast of Sonsbeck. Flight Sergeant J. Leigh and his navigator on 157 Squadron in NF.XIX MM653/L claimed a Bf 110. Flight Lieutenants 'Dickie' Goucher and 'Tiny' Bulloch on 85 Squadron in NF.XXX/J claimed a Bf 110 also, forty kilometres from Ülm.

On 18/19 December 308 bombers attacked Danzig (Gdynia), Münster and Nürnberg. In the Gotenhafen and Danzig areas three crews of I./NJG5 claimed all four Lancasters that failed to return from the Main Force raid on Danzig. Forty-eight aircraft of 100 Group supported the operation and Mosquitoes of 2nd TAF and FIU intruded over the continent. Four 2nd TAF crews were successful. 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF destroyed a Ju 88 while 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF achieved three victories. Four heavies and a FIU

Mosquito flown by Flying Officer Desmond Tull DFC and Flying Officer Peter Cowgill DFC failed to return. Tull accidentally rammed Bf 110 G9+CC of Stab IV/NJG1 flown by Hauptmann Adolph Breves (with Feldwebel Telsnig, bordfunker and Unteroffizier Ofers, bordschütze) who was coming into land at Düsseldorf airfield at 2230 hours. Tull and Cowgill are buried in Reichswald Forest Cemetery near Kleef. A large part of one of the wings of the 110 was torn off but Breves landed without further damage. He subsequently received official confirmation of his Mosquito 'Abschuss'. Breves finished the war with eighteen victories. (The Bf 110 was repaired and test-flown on 31 December).

Flight Lieutenant William Taylor and Flying Officer Jeffery N. Edwards on 157 Squadron at the end of an uneventful patrol achieved a second victory. Having set course for base, they ran into 'Window' but they were able to pick up a contact at about six miles' range. Their target was climbing steeply and orbiting. At 2,000 feet and 800 feet above they obtained a visual. Taylor was nearly overshooting so he dropped back and weaved gently. Another visual was obtained 30° above him. After chasing for another five minutes the contact was correctly identified as an 'Owl'. It was He 219A-0 G9+GH of 1/NJG1 crewed by Unteroffizier Herbert Scheuerlein, an inexperienced replacement pilot and his bordfunker, Unteroffizier Max Günther Heinze, which had taken off at about 2200 hours on 19 December. Taylor opened fire from 250 yards but the Mosquito was caught in the night-fighter's slipstream and his shooting was erratic. Strikes were observed and minor explosions appeared in the fuselage before the 'Owl' turned slowly to port and peeled off. Visual was lost but the Heinkel was followed on AI until contact was lost at 12,000 feet. With his radio/radar operator no signs of life and the situation becoming more than dangerous, Scheuerlein jettisoned the canopy, pulled in his legs and ejected from the aircraft. The Heinkel roared past beneath him and spun towards the ground. After quickly separating from his seat, he opened his parachute and made a relatively smooth landing. He felt a sharp pain in his neck - in his haste he had forgotten to unplug the headset wire and the throat microphone had almost strangled him. A few seconds later, the 'Owl' exploded on the ground at Südlohn. Taylor and Edwards died on 22/23 December when they crashed while attempting to make an approach to land at Swannington after informing Flying Control over the R/T that they had no aileron control.

Bad weather interfered again before operations resumed on 21/22 December when 475 heavies attacked Köln, Bonn, Pölitz and Schneidemuhl. Three bombers failed to return from the raid on Pölitz. There were no Nachtjäger claims. Wing Commander K. H. P. Beauchamp DSO DFC and Flight Lieutenant Leslie Scholefield DFC on 157 Squadron in a NF.XIX flew in support of Bomber Command operations against Bonn and Cologne and returned with a claim for a Ju 88 north of Frankfurt. They had identified their quarry in the light of a half-moon from 200 feet on his starboard quarter below. Beauchamp dropped back to 200 feet dead astern and fired a short burst, causing strikes. The Ju 88 immediately peeled off port and went down on to the top of some stratus cloud and visual contact was lost but as there was no resultant explosion Beauchamp followed down and regained a visual on him as he was weaving away violently just above cloud. The Mosquito crew closed in on his

port quarter and slightly above. Beauchamp opened fire at about 600 yards. He set the port engine on fire before pulling up and doing a port orbit over the Ju 88, watching the fire increase until the aircraft flew into the ground in a shallow dive and exploded.

On 22/23 December 166 Lancasters and two Mosquitoes attacked Koblenz without loss while 106 aircraft raided the Bingen marshalling yards on the Rhine thirty miles south-west of Frankfurt. Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DSO DFC* and Flying Officer Frank Seymour 'Bill' Skelton DSO* DFC* on 85 Squadron destroyed a Bf 110 at Koblenz-Gutersloh.

Flying Officer Alan Joseph 'Ginger' Owen and Flying Officer J. S. Victor McAllister DFM claimed a squadron hat trick of victories. They destroyed a Bf 110 north of Saarbrücken and then they got a Ju 88, which Owen despatched with a 'medium' burst from 150 yards, which set the port engine on fire before crashing. Twenty minutes later, a third contact was obtained four miles ahead. Closing to 2,000 feet a visual was obtained well above him. It was another Ju 88 and it was taking evasive action. A short deflection burst scored strikes on the port wing and pieces flew off. The Ju 88 dived vertically and contact was lost at 7,000 feet. Four minutes later, an explosion occurred on the ground. Ju 88 27+HK of II./NJG6 crashed at Landstuhl killing Oberfeldwebel Max Hausser, who had yet to open his score, Oberfeldwebel Fritz Steube, funker and Feldwebel Ernst Beisswenger, bordschütze. Ju 88G-6 2Z+DC also of II./NJG6, crashed at Lebach, north of Saarbrücken. Hauptmann Kopp, who had one night victory, bailed out injured; one of his crew was killed. [109]

Squadron Leader 'Dolly' Doleman DFC and Flight Lieutenant 'Bunny' Bunch DFC on 157 Squadron also returned triumphantly to Swannington having destroyed a Ju 88 and also claiming another as a 'probable'. Their first contact was obtained North at Bingen at 1835 hours when the Mosquito NF.XIX was at 15,000 feet. Doleman chased it to 20,000 feet just north of Bingen but as they staggered up the last few thousand feet a 'Monica' contact was picked up and Doleman had to break away. As he turned to port the 'Monica', which had been jammed, cleared and they saw their pursuer behind showing IFF. Doleman neared the bomber stream and dived into a cloud of 'Window' where they lost him. This used up about twenty minutes and as the bombing had finished the Mosquito crew flew north of Frankfurt to have a look at Limburg. There they obtained a contact at ten miles range and well below. Doleman and Bunch were at 15,000 feet and range was closed. They descended to 8,000 feet and Bunch obtained visual at 3,000 feet and at 1,500 feet from below the target was identified as a Ju 88. The German pilot foolishly slackened his turn and Doleman was able to close to 500 feet and with only o-ring deflection pump shells into his fuselage and port engine, which burst into flames. Doleman remained behind just to make sure but the Ju 88 dived straight in five miles west of Limburg at 1935 hours. Doleman and Bunch wished their victim 'a Merry Christmas on the way down - literally cooking his goose for him.'

Two Halifaxes and one Lancaster were lost on the Bingen raid. All were shot down by Nachtjäger, including NA501 on 578 Squadron, which, in all probability, fell victim to Oberleutnant Peter Spoden of 6./NJG6, for his 18th

Abschuss (Spoden claimed a Halifax shot down at 1859 hours and at a height of 4000m in Grid Square QO 7, which was in the Kylburg area). By late December Spoden was appointed Staffelkapitän of 6./NJG6. On the night of 26/27 December he was seeking Allied gliders supplying men and equipment to encircled troops at Bastogne when his aircraft was hit by German flak. The port engine immediately caught fire and he was forced to belly-land his aircraft near Stradtkyll. Knocked unconscious when his head struck the gunsight, Spoden was pulled from the blazing wreckage by his crewmen.

No aircraft were lost to German action on the night of 23/24 December when 52 Mosquitoes of the LNSF bombed rail yards at Limburg in Germany and another forty attacked Siegburg. 2nd TAF Mosquito NF.XXX, NF.XIII and NF.XVII crews and 100 Group NF.XIX and NF.XXX crews destroyed fourteen Luftwaffe aircraft. Flight Lieutenants G. C. Chapman and 'Jimmy' Stockley on 85 Squadron in NF.XIX 'N' got a Bf 110 at Mannheim-Mainz. Most likely it was a Bf 110G-4 flown by Leutnant Clemens Ostrowitzki of 1/NJG6 which went down at Frei-Laubertshein southeast of bad Kreuznach. Ostrowitzki, who had four Abschüsse, was killed. Gefreiter Kloth the bordunker and Unteroffizier Wenzel Nosko who was wounded, bailed out safely.

Four of the victories went to crews of 488 Squadron RNZAF and Flight Lieutenant Kenneth William 'Chunky' Stewart, a solicitor from Dunedin and his navigator/radar operator Flying Officer H. E. 'Bill' Brumby[110] got two of them for their first kills since joining the squadron. While on patrol near Roermond Stewart noticed clusters of white flares and obtained permission to investigate. His controller said that there was no activity in that direction but Brumby succeeded in putting Stewart onto an aircraft. After a short chase, with the target taking mild evasive action, they identified the aircraft as a Ju 88 but for positive identification Stewart closed to 100 feet whereupon the Ju 88 fired off a red flare which illuminated the black crosses on the fin, fuselage and mainplane. Stewart dropped back to 150 yards and fired a short burst observing strikes between the port engine and fuselage. With a second burst the port engine caught fire and the Ju 88 spun down in flames, exploding before hitting the ground near Maeseyck. The controller told Stewart to climb to 7,000 feet and whilst doing so he saw further flares and again requested permission to chase. After changing Controls Brumby seized an opportunity and, after the Luftwaffe aircraft had throttled back, turned, climbed and straightened out, Stewart obtained a visual at 2,000 feet which Brumby confirmed with his glasses as another Ju 88. At 300 yards this aircraft also dropped reddish flares and the Mosquito plainly saw black crosses and also the bomb racks. Stewart closed to 200/150 yards and gave two short bursts, which started a fire in the fuselage. The Ju 88 did a diving turn to starboard and when the Mosquito was down to 1,000 feet the enemy aircraft hit the ground and exploded.[111]

On Christmas Eve 104 Lancasters bombed Hangelar airfield near Bonn, losing one aircraft and 97 Lancasters and five Mosquitoes attacked the marshalling yards at Cologne/Nippes. Mosquito squadrons in 100 Group and 2nd TAF shot down thirteen German aircraft, five of them by four crews of 100 Group and eight by seven crews of 2nd TAF, which dispatched 139 Mosquitoes

to targets in southwest Germany. Flying Officer J. A. Watt and Flight Lieutenant E. H. Collis on 410 'Cougar' Squadron RCAF destroyed a Ju 88 of 2./NJG2, which crashed near Roermond. Oberfeldwebel Heinrich Tetzlaff with one confirmed night victory was killed. Unteroffizier Rudolf Reichelt, bordfunker, Obergefreiter Werner Kilian, bordmechaniker and Unteroffizier Walter Gebert, bordshütze, survived and were taken prisoner by British ground troops. Wing Commander Russ Bannock DFC* now CO, 406 'Lynx' Squadron RCAF and Flying Officer Bob Bruce in NF.XXX MM693 were looking for more victories to add to an unidentified aircraft (a Bf 110 flown by Feldwebel H. Schurich of NJG6) on 12/13 September and two Bf 108s on 27/28 September, which took Bannock's score to four. Bannock's fifth victim and his first on his new squadron was a Ju 88G-1 of 9./NJG4 ten kilometres west of Paderborn. Oberfeldwebel Manfred Ludwig (no victories) and Feldwebel Hans Fischl were killed. Leutnant Wolfram Möckel of 4/NJG2 flying a Ju 88G-1, was shot down near Hasselt, Belgium just before midnight on Christmas Eve during a sortie to harass night traffic around Maastricht and Liège. Möckel bailed out safely and he ended the war with ten Abschüsse. Twenty-three year old Unteroffizier Heinz Nowak of 11./NJG6 flying a Bf 110G-4 was shot down during aerial combat with a Mosquito fifteen kilometres northwest of Neuweid/Rhein. Nowak, Unteroffizier Johannes Antoni, funker and Adolf Börner were injured but bailed out safely.[112] Low-level Intruders covered Luftwaffe airfields and carried out 'Ranger' operations in the Breslau area. Locomotives, rolling stock and motor transport were bombed and strafed by the AI.Mk.IV Mosquito squadrons operating as low-level Intruders. The AI.Mk.X Mosquitoes enjoyed almost total air superiority over the Nachtjagdgeschwadern this night. Luftwaffe losses included a Bf 110 of 7./NJG1, which crashed near Roermond killing the crew. A Ju 88S-3 of 5./NG1 was shot down on their return trip to Ahlhorn after dropping fragmentation and anti-personnel bombs on Allied road traffic in the Luxembourg-Metz area and crashed south of Afferden/Deest. Three of Unteroffizier Hans Fischer's crew were killed and one was taken prisoner. Squadron Leader James Benson DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Lewis Brandon DFC* on 157 Squadron in a Mosquito NF.XIX on High Level Support Patrol for Bomber Command attacks on Cologne and Hangelar destroyed a Bf 110 to take their score to nine.

Flight Lieutenant 'Jimmy' Mathews and Warrant Officer 'Penny' Penrose on 157 Squadron blasted a Ju 88 out of the night sky with a 1½ -second burst, which resulted in the starboard engine bursting into flames. As it turned to port, three parachutes came out in quick succession and three bodies sailed to earth. The aircraft then spun down and crashed three miles southwest of Köln. Another success went to Captain Svein Heglund DFC and Flying Officer Robert Symon of 85 Squadron, who claimed a Bf 110 destroyed.[113] Squadron Leader 'Dolly' Doleman DFC and Flight Lieutenant 'Bunny' Bunch DFC of 157 Squadron returned from a high level support patrol for Bomber Command attacks on Cologne and Hangelar with claims for a Bf 110 west of Cologne and a second at 8,000 feet in the Duisburg area. One of their victims probably was 32-year-old 'Experte' Hauptmann Heinz Strüning, Ritterkreuz mit Eichenlaub (Knight's Cross with Oak leaves), Staffelkapitän, 9./NJG1, who was shot down

at 2200 hours in Bf 110G-4 G9+CT while he tried to attack a Lancaster over Cologne, following a skirmish, probably with either NF.XIII MM462/T on 604 Squadron or by NF.XIX TA404/M on 157 Squadron flown by Squadron Leader 'Dolly' Doleman. The Bf 110 crashed in Referather woods near Bergisch Gladbach/Rheinland. This was third time unlucky for Strüning who had been forced to bail out of his Bf 110G-4 on 14 July 1943 after being wounded by enemy fire and again on 5/6 September when both engines of his He 219 were damaged in combat and he crashed at Güsten after his bordfunker was killed. This time Strüning's bordfunker and bordschütze bailed out safely but Strüning was killed in similar circumstances to Hauptmann Hans-Heinz Augenstein when he hit the tail of his 110. His body was found two months later. His final score was 56 Night-Abschüsse (including two Mosquitoes) in NJG1 and NJG2 in 280 sorties (250 at night).

Other 'Experten' killed around this time were Hauptmann Hans-Karl Kamp of Stab JG300 (estimated 28 night- and two day- Abschüsse). Kamp, who was born on 1 September 1918 in Essen, was shot down and killed by a P-51 Mustang north of Hamburg on 31 December. Hauptmann Hermann Leube of 4./NJG3 with 22 victories, died attempting to crash-land his Ju 88G-6 at Benthuizen near Gouda on 28 December. Hauptmann Alfons Köster who had 25 night victories and one day kill was killed when he crashed into a farmhouse on landing near Varel/Oldenburg in heavy fog on 6/7 January 1945. Köster had been born in Hüingen on 6 February 1919. He was the son of a woodsman and one of ten children. His career with I/NJG2 had begun in 1941 and he made his first claim on 9 April near Coltishall when he brought down Sergeant Truman.

The nights of late December were much quieter with no Main Force operations on the 25/26th because of bad weather. Six claims were made by Mosquito crews in this period, including two Ju 88Gs at Kaltenkirchen by 23-year old Flying Officer Ralph Edward Isaac Britten RCAF and Flight Lieutenant L. E. Fownes on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF on the 27/28th. During the day 200 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes attacked rail yards at Rheydt for the loss of one Lancaster and a Mosquito of 109 Squadron, which crashed behind the Allied lines in Holland. Flight Lieutenant William McKellar Hodgson DFC AFM (who was from Uruguay) was killed. His navigator, Flying Officer A. J. Cork DFM survived and returned to the squadron. German claims in the same period were equally low. On the night of 26/27 December Hauptmann Bruno Kamsties of II./NJG2 flying a Bf 110 claimed a Mosquito for his fourth Abschuss. NF.XXX MM705, which was of a defensive patrol, was shot down at 0030 hours and crashed Holsbeck, Belgium. Squadron Leader D. L. Ryalls and Flight Lieutenant J. B. Hampson were killed. Unteroffizier Alfred Neumann of 10/NJG6 was killed when his Bf 110G-4 ZZ+EU was shot down in the Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler area, possibly by a Mosquito on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF. It is thought that his bordfunker, Horst Römer and bordshütze, Paul Rath, survived. Neumann had one victory, a B-17 (possibly *El Lobo* of the 305th Bomb Group) on 4 February 1943 northeast of Ameland. On the night of 29/30 December Unteroffizier Hermann Möckel of 2/NJG4 who also had one victory, was shot down by an Allied night fighter

near Lesse in Belgium and was taken prisoner.

On New Year's Eve crews of the Gruppenstab and the 8th and 9th Staffeln of III./NJG2 at Marx/Varel were given the usual meteorological and signal' briefing. The Kommandeur told the crews that in view of the suitable weather conditions, a RAF raid was to be mounted that night. He was right; 149 Lancasters and seventeen Mosquitoes attacked the railway yards at Osterfeld. Three Lancasters failed to return, two of which were claimed by Hauptmann Johannes Hager, Staffelkapitän, 6./NJG1 in the Essen area at 1900 and 1905 hours. Twenty-eight Lancasters attacked cruisers in Oslo Fjord. One Lancaster was lost. In minor operations 77 Mosquitoes went to Berlin and twelve to Ludwigshafen. Also, 33 RCM sorties and 33 Mosquito patrols were flown and sixteen Halifaxes and ten Lancasters carried out 'Gardening' operations in the Kattegat. Lancaster PB894 on 630 Squadron flown by Warrant Officer Edward Ainsley Thomas was shot down by Hauptmann Eduard Schröder of 3./NJG3 into the sea fifty kilometres northwest of Hanstholm in the early hours of 1 January with no survivors. Schröder's first Abschuss had been a Hawk-75A south of Bienwald on 25 September 1939 and his second, a Spitfire, over England on 25 October 1940. He had been wounded in action by Soviet flak on 4 July 1941 and had made a forced landing at Patasi (Prien). Earlier, Schröder's eight Ju 88s were given a fright on take-off. The first away was 4R+OS which sat at the end of the runway awaiting the signal when a Mosquito 'Intruder' dropped a bomb which exploded on the runway about thirty metres from the Junkers, which apparently suffered no damage and took off after a short delay. The crew made for Hannover and soon they saw the first cascade flares.

On arrival, they saw the incendiary bombs and fires. A four-engined bomber was seen to be held in searchlights and heading southwest. The 'Naxos' and 'SN-2' of 4R+OS had been unserviceable for some time and the four-engined aircraft was lost. The Ju 88 first turned west-northwest in the hope of finding the bomber stream but after fifteen minutes the starboard engine cut out. It was a coolant leak, caused by the 'Intruder's bomb. The 'Intruder' was crewed by Flying Officer Lewis Heath and Flight Sergeant Jack Thompson on 23 Squadron, who had taken off from Little Snoring at 1700 hours on 1 January. The Ju 88 pilot turned due east to return to Marx/Varel but soon afterwards, the crew believing themselves to be over German territory and anxious to find their exact whereabouts, fired a recognition signal followed by two 'reds' which they repeated. They were then surprised by a night-fighter attack from aft. The pilot lost control and all the crew bailed out. They all landed in Allied territory and were taken prisoner. It was considered that splinters hit the Junkers from bombs dropped on the airfield by the Mosquito crew before take-off.

'Intruder' incursions over Luftwaffe bases were being made with haunting regularity and there was much 'joy' as the predators enjoyed rich pickings from among the returning flocks of unsuspecting, weary and chiefly inexperienced replacement Nachtjagd crews. The last of 39 aircraft to fall to 100 Group in December 1944 were two Ju 88s and a He 219 on New Year's Eve. Two of the New Year's Eve victories were the first claimed using ASH.[114] The first went to Squadron Leader Cyril Victor Bennett DFC and Flight Lieutenant

Robert Arthur Smith on 515 Squadron. In the Lovns Bredning area during an 'Intruder' patrol to Grove, Bennett and Smith's Mosquito was fired at with tracer from an unidentified Ju 88. Bennett returned fire at 400 yards and with a two-second burst of cannon. Strikes were seen on the port wing. A second burst cut the Ju 88 in two, the wreckage dropping into Lim Fiord. During the New Year's party that followed at Little Snoring Bennett and Smith were joined by Squadron Leader J. Tweedale and Flight Lieutenant V. Cunningham on 23 Squadron. They had claimed their Squadron's first victory (a Ju 88 at Alhorn) using ASH. On 13 January Bennett and Smith were killed when they went down in the North Sea on the way home.

It is no coincidence that 85 Squadron, which claimed eighteen victories and 157 Squadron, which claimed thirteen, were the only squadrons in 100 Group which were equipped with the excellent AI.Mk.X radar which had very long range and 180 degrees coverage from side to side with no problem from ground returns. This situation annoyed other Mosquito night-fighter crews like that of Flight Lieutenant Paul Mellows and his radar operator 'Dickie' Drew. It had always riled Mellows that 85 Squadron, who had been on defensive work, were allowed to go 'Intruding' and had success such as 169 Squadron had never dreamed of. Many of the Mosquitoes on Mellows' Squadron had come from OTUs; the AI transmitted in all directions and the range was limited to a thousand or more feet less than the Mosquito's height. Finally, Mellows and Drew were sent to 85 Squadron with one or two other crews and were trained on the superb AI.Mk.X. When on 31 December they were told that they were doing their first trip, on the night of a 'Spoof' raid, 'Dickie' Drew was very annoyed indeed. The former accountant felt that they needed a little more time for training and also did not want to waste one of their valuable last six trips on a night when there were no bombers but only 'Window' was being dropped. However, on their patrol point a few miles northwest of Cologne Drew got a contact at six miles at 15,000 feet. The contact was closed at 2,000 feet and they could clearly see four white exhausts and twin tail fins. Shortly after, black crosses on the blue undersurface of the wings were seen in the light of a searchlight.

As soon as Paul Mellows saw black crosses on the blue undersurface of the wings of his quarry he fired a two-second burst from slightly below causing debris to fly off and a small fire in the fuselage. Another two-second burst caused an explosion by the light of which 'Dickie' Drew clearly saw the dihedral and slanting fins of a He 219 'Uhu' (He 219A-2 G9+KL) which was being flown by 26-year old Oberleutnant Heinz Oloff, Staffelkapitän, 3./NJG1, who had nine or ten Abschüsse; and Feldwebel Helmut Fischer, bordshütze. Oloff was one of those pilots who seemed to lead a charmed life. On 24 February 1942, an Unteroffizier at the time he and his crew were slightly injured when he made a bad landing, overshooting the runway and hitting a flak tower, killing two flak troops. Mellows confirmed his radar operator's identification. A further short burst set the 'Owl' well alight and from 1,000 feet to starboard he and Drew saw the Heinkel climb for a few seconds before plunging to earth and explode with a bright orange flash at 1824 hours near Schleiden, fifty kilometres southwest of Cologne. Both men were wounded

but thanks to their 'Katapultsitzen' (ejection seats) they had survived. After the He 219 went down the temperature on the port engine of the Mosquito 'went off the clock' and Mellows had to feather the prop and they returned on the starboard engine to Manston. When they got out of the aeroplane they noticed glycol spurting from the starboard engine. Mellows wrote to Jean his fiancée and told her that there was no coolant left in the starboard engine and would probably have not kept going for more than another 5-10 minutes.'

While it had been a close run thing for Mellows and Drew, once again Heinz Oloff had lived to tell the tale. His brush with death on New Year's Eve 1944 would not be the last of his fateful encounters with a Mosquito of 100 Group.

100 (Special Duties) Group Order of Battle

Squadron	Aircraft	1st Op in Group	Station
192	Mosquito BIV/BXVI Wellington BIII Halifax BIII/V Mosquito II	December 1943	Foulsham
141	Beaufighter VI Mosquito II/VI/30	December 1943	West Raynham
239	Mosquito II/VI/30	December 1943	West Raynham
515	Mosquito II/VI	December 1943	Little Snoring Great Massingham
169	Mosquito II/VI/XIX	20 January 1944	Little Snoring
214	Fortress BII/III	20/21 April 1944	Sculthorpe Oulton
199	Sterling III Halifax BIII	1 May 1944 February 1945	North Creake
157	Mosquito XIX/30	May 1944	Swannington
85	Mosquito XII/XVII	5/6 June 1944	Swannington
23	Mosquito VI	5/6 July 1944	Little Snoring
223	Liberator VI Fortress B11/III	19 September 1944	Oulton
171	Stirling BII Halifax BIII	15 September 1944	North Creake
462(RAAF)	Halifax BIII	13/14 March 1945	Foulsham
1473 Flight			
692 Flight			
1694 Flight			
1699 Flight			
Bomber Support Development Unit			
The Window Research Section.			

Endnotes Chapter 8

97 A homer, which gave a bearing of the enemy night-fighter's IFF set and had a range of 40 miles. Stop-gap arrangements were made to fit some 141 Squadron Mosquitoes with ASH (Air-Surface H), a centimetric radar originally developed in the USA as an ASV (air-to-surface-vessel radar for US Navy aircraft and the Fleet Air Arm. ASH was a wing mounted radar but could not be fitted to the Mosquito wing it was installed in a 'thimble' radome in the nose.

98 *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Combat Claims 1939-1945* by John Foreman, Johannes Mathews and Simon Parry (Red Kite 2004). It is probable that Finlayson and Webster's victim was Bf 110G-4 G9+MN of 5./NJG1 flown by Feldwebel Robert Koch, who was on his 70th sortie and had one victory. Koch bailed out and was slightly injured. Unteroffiziers Heinz Forster, bordfunker and Ernst Darg, bordshütze were KIA.

99 Flying Officer F. H. Dell (Evaded) and Flying Officer R. A. Naiff (KIA).

100 Nachtjagd lost 3 other fighters to Mosquitoes. Flying Officer Desmond Tull and Flying Officer Peter J. Cowgill DFC on the FIU destroyed a Ju 88G W of Kassel.

101 Also, 54 Mosquitoes of 8 Group made attacks on Hamburg and other German cities. 6 Stirlings flew on Resistance operations. No a/c lost.

102 Nachtjagd lost one aircraft; Bf 110G-4 G9+PZ of 12./NJG1 crashed north of Düsseldorf due to Feindbeschuss (enemy fire). Unteroffizier Johannes Kischke and crew were killed.

103 A Collection of WW II letters From Pilot Officer Norman Gould to his Mother and Family: *From Model T's to Lancasters* by Ted Gould.

104 This kill is attributed to Squadron Leader Burbridge and Skelton on 85 Squadron. Flying Officer Witt and Flight Lieutenant Thomas William Redfern, pilot died on 26/27 January 1945 when their Mosquito NF.XXX crashed near Oulton, Norfolk in bad weather during night training exercise.

105 During night flying on 7 June 1945, Flight Lieutenants Turner and Partridge, one of the longest serving crews on 151 Squadron were killed when their Mosquito suffered an engine failure. On the way back to base it was presumed that they mistook the harbour lights at Falmouth for the aerodrome circuit lights and were unable to reach base.

106 NF.XIII HK530. Flight Lieutenant K. J. Pamment KIA. Flight Sergeant H. C. Wiles PoW/WIA.

107 Heglund had joined 85 Squadron in October 1944 having scored 13 and 1/3 kills flying Spitfires on 331 Squadron.

108 On 1 January 1945 Hedgecoe, who was posted to 151 Squadron died in a crash-landing in bad weather on his first sortie with this unit. N. L. Bamford DFC* his navigator who had shared in the destruction of ten aircraft, died also.

109 Wing Commander Peter Green DSO DFC and Flight Lieutenant Oxby DFM** on 219 Squadron in NF.XXX MM792 shot down a Ju 88. Hauptmann Siegfried Gnass of 12/NJG6 in a Ju 88 was shot down and killed in aerial combat at Dachsenhausen/Taunus.

110 In NF.XXX MM822.

111 Stewart and Brumby destroyed a Ju 88G at Groenlo on 21/22 February 1945, a Bf 110 8 m NW of Bocholt on 26/27.3.45 and a Bf 110 20 miles SE Osnabrück on 7/8 April 1945 to take Stewart's final score to five destroyed and one damaged (He 111 on 26/27 March 1945) to earn him the title in the squadron records of 'the Last of the Aces'.

112 Post war Nowak flew the Boeing 707 with Lufthansa. He died aged 81 in 2002.

113 Heglund's 15th victory of the war.

114 AN/APS4/AI.Mk.XV (ASH) 3 cm radar with horizontal scanner; maximum range 8 miles. This small torpedo-shaped installation more often seen on Fleet Air Arm Fireflies was originally intended for searching for surface vessels and reading coastlines. It had the tiniest plan position indicator (PPI) of all airborne radars, measuring about 3 inches by 1½ inches and was proportionally efficient for air interception.

Chapter 9
In The Dark All Cats Are Grey

They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

The Owl and The Pussycat **by Edward Lear 1812-1888**

The Luftwaffe was powerless to stop the inexorable advance westwards but there was one last attempt to try to halt the allies. Since 20 December 1944 many Jagdgruppen had been transferred to airfields in the west for Unternehmen [Operation] 'Bodenplatte', when approximately 850 Luftwaffe fighters took off at 0745 hours on Sunday morning 1 January to attack 27 airfields in northern France, Belgium and southern Holland. The four-hour operation succeeded in destroying about 100 Allied aircraft but it cost the Luftwaffe 300 aircraft, most of which were shot down by Allied anti-aircraft guns deployed primarily against the V1s and by 'friendly' flak. Twenty-three year old Oberleutnant Hartmut Meier of 7/NJG2 at Twente was killed near Meerkerk, believed shot down by a Mosquito night-fighter on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF piloted by Squadron Leader R. F. Hatton. Meier's Ju 88G-6 crashed at Meerkerk, north of Gorinchem Holland. His two bordfunkers, Feldwebel Artur Gutzeit and Obergefreiter Thorwald Wettern and 25-year old Oberfeldwebel Walter Donath, bordshütze were killed.

On the night of 1/2 January Mosquitoes of 2nd TAF and 100 Group on bomber support covered heavy operations over Germany and eight German night-fighters were claimed shot down. II./NJG1 were badly hit, losing three aircraft and their crews. North of Twente Mosquito NF.XIII HK526/U flown by Flight Lieutenants R. J. Foster DFC and M. F. Newton DFC on 604 Squadron in 2nd TAF claimed three Ju 88s shot down. One was a Ju 88G-6 piloted by Feldwebel Johann 'Hans' Werthner of 10/NJG3 who had six Abschüsse. He was the only one who could escape by bailing out and he was taken prisoner. His funker Unteroffizier Gerhard Hoppe and bordmechaniker Unteroffizier Franz Ofenschiesst were killed in the crash near Dolphia, three kilometres east of Enschede. Flight Lieutenant F. T. Reynolds and Flying Officer F. A. van den Heuvel on 219 Squadron in NF.XXX MM790 destroyed a Bf 110 and Squadron Leader Dennis Chetwynd Furse DFC and Flight Lieutenant 'Johnny' Downes DFC on 604 Squadron in NF.XIII HK529 claimed a He 219 'Owl' at Mönchengladbach.

Eight crews on 85 Squadron participated in a maximum effort in the Kiel and Ruhr areas while the Main Force attacked the Mittelland Canal, rail yards at Vohwinkel and Dortmund. Flight Lieutenants 'Dickie' Goucher and 'Tiny' Bulloch chased a contact for eleven minutes before obtaining a visual. It was a Ju 188. Goucher gave the Junkers a couple of bursts and it fell in flames, crashing ten miles north of Münster. Almost immediately, 'Tiny' Bulloch got a second blip on his AI.Mk.X scope apparently dropping Düppel. Goucher got closer and they could see that their enemy was a Ju 88G. Dickie Goucher gave it a long burst from dead astern as the Junkers turned to port. Flying flaming debris struck the Mosquito causing it to vibrate badly and lose height. Goucher jettisoned his drop tanks and the port tank came over the top of the wing, damaging the tail plane and at the same time shearing off the pitot head. They landed safely at Brussels/Melsbroek and were flown home in a C-47 the next day. Flying Officer L. J. York on 85 Squadron scored the other victory this night, a Ju 88. Goucher and Bulloch remained together until the end of the war, being posted to 151 Squadron at Hunsdon on 18 January 1945. Hauptmann Paul Szameitat, Kommandeur of I./NJG3 was seriously injured by return fire from one of his opponents.

Born on 19 December 1919 in Wolittnik, East Prussia he had achieved the first of his 28 night and one day[115] victories on the night of 26/27 February 1942. On the night of 17/18 January 1943 Szameitat shot down three Viermots bombers and was awarded the Trophy of Honour on 6 May. Promoted to Hauptmann and appointed Gruppenkommandeur II./NJG3, he destroyed four Lancasters on the night of 2/3 December and followed this with another five victories the next night. On 14 December he was appointed Kommandeur of I./NJG3. On 1/2 January his Ju 88C-6 crashed while trying to make an emergency landing in a plantation of firs near Bückeburg in the Weser Mountains, killing Szameitat and his crew, Feldwebel Kübler and Feldwebel Blocküs. In recognition of his achievements, Hauptmann Paul Szameitat was posthumously awarded the German Cross in Gold on 20 March 1944 and the Knight's Cross on 6 April that same year.

On the night of 2/3 January when 514 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes bombed Nürnberg and 389 aircraft raided Ludwigshafen, Mosquito fighters claimed a Ju 188 near Frankfurt and two Ju 88s shot down. The 'Night Hawk Partners' of Squadron Leader Branse Burbridge DSO* DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Frank Seymour 'Bill' Skelton DSO* DFC* on 85 Squadron became the top-scoring night-fighter crew in the RAF with 21 victories when they destroyed a Ju 88 fifteen miles southwest of Ludwigshafen. (Bob Braham and Wing Commander John Cunningham both destroyed nineteen enemy aircraft at night).

Four Lancasters were lost from the Nürnberg force and one Halifax from the Ludwigshafen raid. Hauptmann Kurt-Heinz Weigel of 11./NJG6 claimed two Viermots west and southeast of Stuttgart for his 2nd and 3rd victories. The first of these at 1844 hours 4500 metres over the west of Stuttgart was Lancaster III PB477 on 405 'Vancouver' Squadron skippered

by 31-year old Wing Commander Kenneth 'Kenny' John Lawson DSO* DFC who was killed. Only 33-year old Sergeant Sidney Rhodes the flight engineer and Warrant Officer1 Dorland G. Plyley RCAF the rear gunner, survived to be taken prisoner. Later, in a letter to the mother of Flight Lieutenant Eric Cecil Duke the wireless operator, Rhodes said: 'We were attacked by a fighter. He fired underneath us setting us on fire and the skipper gave the order to bail out. The aircraft went into a sharp spin pinning me to the side of and I couldn't move. The only way I got out was because the nose was exploded from the fuselage and as I was in the nose I came away with it. I pulled my chute and hoped for the best. I never saw the boys after that. I cried when I got down but am not ashamed of it. They were a great bunch and I shall be proud of them to the end if my days. Eric was a typical example of men who gave to the Air Force that greatness and courage that saved England in her darkest hour. But for the grace of God I should be today buried in Germany.'

All five bodies were recovered the next day within a radius of 500 yards from the scene of the crash. Weigel's second Abschuss was Lancaster PB518 on 100 Squadron eleven minutes later. Flying Officer P. M. Bunn and two of his crew were taken prisoner; four others were killed. Weigel had been shot down early in the war at Scapa Flow and taken prisoner. He feigned mental illness and was repatriated to Germany in 1944. Hauptmann Martin 'Tino' Becker Kommandeur, IV./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster south of Mannheim-north of Bruchsal and another Lancaster over Luxembourg for his 44th and 45th victories. A total of 53 Mosquitoes were dispatched to Berlin and Oberleutnant Kurt Welter of II/NJG11 claimed B.XX KB222 XD-R on 139 Squadron for his 32nd Abschüsse. It crashed at Natho ten kilometres ESE of Zerbst with the loss of Flight Lieutenants James Paul Ogilvie Howard DFC RCAF and Derek Gordon Williams DFC. Another Mosquito failed to return from a raid by nine Mosquitoes on Castrop-Rauxel.

On 3 January 99 Lancasters raided the Hansa benzol plant at Dortmund and the Castrop-Rauxel plant. One Lancaster failed to return from the Dortmund raid. That night no Main Force operations were carried out by the heavies but on the night of the 4/5th 347 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes controversially attacked Royan at the mouth of the River Gironde. Upwards of 800 French civilians were killed. Four Lancasters were lost and two more collided behind the Allied lines in France and crashed. The number of aircraft lost in mid-air collisions is not known but it is generally accepted that the numbers were few.

On the night of 5/6 January when 664 aircraft bombed Hannover, Captain Svein Heglund DFC and Flying Officer Robert O. Symon on 85 Squadron who were seeking their fifteenth victory in their Mosquito NF.XXX flew an eventful High Level Support Patrol north of Osnabrück. After patrolling a beacon in the Münster/Osnabrück area without any contact they set course for Hannover and arrived just as the target indicators were being dropped. They got a contact and chased it in a westerly direction for twenty minutes but when they got a visual of exhaust

flames it looked like a Mosquito and they took it for one of the Path Finder force and turned back towards the target. At 2223 hours they got another head-on contact north of Osnabrück and turned in behind it. It was slightly above and they closed in to about 2,000 feet when Symon lost contact owing to scanner trouble. Heglund made one orbit and Symon picked up contact again at four miles' range. The Mosquito team closed in again and visually identified it as a Bf 110. As he was slightly overshooting Heglund weaved underneath the German aircraft, keeping visual contact all the time. At 500 feet range he pulled up behind it and gave it is a short burst, which caused an explosion in the fuselage. There was a lot of smoke and debris flew off but the 110 continued flying straight and level. Heglund thought that the crew was killed right away. He fired another burst, which missed but a third burst set the enemy aircraft well on fire and it crashed with a large explosion at 2230 hours. It was the Norwegian's final victory of the war, which made him the top scoring Royal Norwegian Air Force pilot with fifteen and one-third victories.

Flight Lieutenant 'Ben' Benson DSO DFC* and Flight Lieutenant Lewis 'Brandy' Brandon DSO DFC* also notched their final victory of the war, shooting down a He 219 Uhu at 2008 hours five kilometres south of Wesendorf for their tenth confirmed kill (and four damaged). Their victim wasa He 219A-0 of 2./NJG1 flown by Oberfeldwebel Josef Ströhlein who was killed and his bordfunker, Unteroffizier Hans Kenne, who ejected safely. Ströhlein had just claimed a Lancaster for his fourth Night-Abschüsse. Another He 219 which was flown by Oberfeldwebel Hans Keilich of 1/NJG1 came down near Diepholz as a result of engine failure. Flight Lieutenant A. S. Briggs and Flying Officer Rodwell on 515 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 at Jägel airfield and Wing Commander Russ Bannock DFC* RCAF and Flight Lieutenant Robert Bruce DFC on 406 'Lynx' Squadron RCAF destroyed a He 111 at Josum airfield. It was the Canadian's seventh victory of the war. (Bannock and Bruce's eighth victim was a UEA on 4/5 April and his ninth and final victory was on 23/24 April when a Ju 88 was destroyed at Witstock). Ju 88 R4+CD of III./NJG2, piloted by Oberleutnant Bruno Heilig was possibly the aircraft shot down by Flight Lieutenant A. S. Briggs and Flying Officer Rodwell on 515 Squadron. Heilig attempted an emergency landing in a field near Horsbyg close to Jägel airfield in Denmark but on approach he hit a hill and snapped off the tail assembly and the aircraft cartwheeled. Heilig who had twelve Abschüsse, Unteroffizier Günther Kulas, bordfunker, Gefreiter Johan Goliasch, bordmechaniker and Obergefreiter Horst Jauernig, bordshütze, were killed.[116]

Despite these successes 23 Halifaxes and eight Lancasters failed to return from Hannover, the majority shot down by an effective 'Tame Boar' operation. Lancaster III JB603 on 100 Squadron skippered by 26-year old Flying Officer Reginald Barker a former policeman, was shot down by Leutnant Rolf Ebhardt of 8./NJG1 at 2231 hours flying in Bf 110 G9+LR. The claim was also picked up by the RAF 'Y' Service over the ether confirming the report and the area of Twente in Holland. Ebhardt wrote:

'The Lancaster, once it had dropped its bombs, was faster than our Bf 110 now that we have very heavy armament, SN-2 aerial and exhaust screens on the engines. However, we closed in and made out the Lancaster at about 200 metres. We knew it was a Lancaster by the reddish exhaust flames - the Halifax had bluish. I tried to arm my upward firing guns, but they appeared to have jammed so I attacked from behind and below. At about 100 metres I fired letting the Lancaster through my burst of fire, the muzzle flash of the MK.108 momentarily blinding me. He is not on fire and whilst I am behind him he suddenly tips over onto his port wing and dives away into the darkness below. Then a few seconds later a bright flask and the Lancaster drops down burning and crashes, but then no fire? This was Ebhardt's eighth and final Abschuss of the war.

Two Lancasters were lost on a raid on a bottleneck in the German supply system in the Ardennes in a valley at Houffalize in Belgium. Two Mosquito bombers were lost raiding Berlin while two 100 Group Mosquitoes also failed to return, making 37 aircraft lost in total. One of the Mosquito losses was claimed by Oberleutnant Kurt Welter. Thirty-one bombers were claimed destroyed by Nachtjagd.

On 6/7 January over 600 aircraft set out to bomb two important German rail junctions at Hanau and Neuss. Many of the bombs dropped by 468 Halifaxes and Lancasters at Hanau and 147 Lancasters at Neuss missed the targets and fell in surrounding districts. Hanau was reported to be '40 per cent destroyed' while in Neuss over 1,700 houses, nineteen industrial premises and twenty public buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged. Major Paul Semrau of Stab./NJG2 claimed three Halifaxes of the Hanau force destroyed for his 38-40th victories. (Semrau and his crew were killed on the night of 7/8 February after their Ju 88G-6 was attacked by a Spitfire flown by Flight Lieutenant K. S. Sleep on 402 'Winnipeg Bear' Squadron RCAF on landing at Twente airfield). Two mine-laying Lancasters conducting 'Gardening' operations off Baltic ports that were shot down by night-fighters were lost without trace. At 1921 hours Hauptmann Eduard Schröder of 3./NJG3 claimed NF939 on 622 Squadron flown by 20-year old Flying Officer Eoin Samuel Francis RAAF forty kilometres northwest of Helsingor for his 19th victory. At 2112 hours PB637 on 103 Squadron flown by Flying Officer Charles Pearton was shot down in the Danzinger Bight by Major Werner 'Red' Hoffmann Staffelkapitän I./NJG5, who mistook it for a Halifax.

The following night, 7/8 January, Bomber Command returned to area bombing with the final major raid on Munich, which was carried out by 645 Lancasters led by nine Mosquitoes. The sheer beauty flying along Lake Constance with the snow-covered Alps crystal clear in the moonlight was in sharp contrast to the losses. Ten Lancasters were shot down; three more went down after collisions and one other crashed in France. Among the Nachtjäger claimants was Oberfeldwebel Ludwig Schmidt of 2./NJG6 who claimed a Lancaster south of Munich while Oberleutnant Wilhelm Engels, Staffelkapitän 1./NJG6 and his bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel Friedrich Meyer claimed a Lancaster east of Munich for his sixteenth Abschüsse. Engel was

wounded in action on 23/24 February when he scored his last four victories (all Lancasters) at Grossachenheim in the Pforzheim area, within minutes of each other. The greatest achievement on the night of 7/8 January was by Feldwebel Günther Bähr of 3./NJG6 who destroyed four Lancasters in the Munich area in eleven minutes for his 21-24th Abschüsse. His 25th-28th Abschüsse - all Lancasters, two near Stuttgart, one north of Ludwigsburg and one the eastern end of Mannheim - took place on 28 January. His 36th and final Night-Abschuss (achieved in about ninety night combat sorties) a Lancaster west of Nürnberg, was on 16 March 1945. 1/NJG1 lost its second He 219 of the month when He 219A-2 G9+FH crashed at Bad Iburg. Unteroffizier Karl Barkenfeld and Obergefreiter Ernst Freudenberger were killed.

The next night operation by the Main Force took place on 12/13 January when Mosquito bombers attacked synthetic-benzol plants at Bochum and Recklinghausen and 32 Halifaxes carried out 'Gardening' operations off Flensburg and Kiel. Mine-laying was extremely hazardous work and on this occasion four Halifaxes were shot down although five were claimed by NJG3. Oberfeldwebel Hans Schadowski claimed two Halifaxes, at Langeland and west of Abenra for his 19th and 20th Abschüsse; Hauptmann Eduard Schröder claimed two more southwest of Faborg and west of Rome for his 20th and 21st Abschüsse and Hauptmann Arnold 'Fritz' Brinkmann of 8./NJG3 claimed the last Halifax of the night at 2300 hours for his fourteenth Abschüsse. Schadowski claimed his 21st victory on the night of 13/14 January when 274 aircraft were dispatched to Saarbrücken and a second force of 218 aircraft attacked the oil plant at Pölitz, near Stettin and reduced it to a 'shambles' for the loss of just two Lancasters. His victim may have been Lancaster PB842 on 619 Squadron, which was attacked by a 'Me 410' fifty kilometres north-west of Hanstholm at 0028 after bombing Pölitz. The bomber was so severely damaged in the attack that Flying Officer Brian Patrick Curran RAAF and crew headed for Sweden, where they force-landed at a satellite of Rinkaby airfield. The only other claims were by Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl Müller of I./NJG11 for a Lancaster and Unteroffizier Scherer of II./NJG4 who claimed a Mosquito. Oberfeldwebel Günther Scheidel of 12/NJG2 who had one Abschuss was shot down and killed by a RAF night-fighter when his Ju 88G-6 crashed at Vlissingen in the Flushing area. Unteroffiziers Walter Grosser, Friedrich Fritzche and Herbert Knop died also.

On 14/15 January over 570 Lancasters took for a raid on the synthetic oil plant at Leuna and caused severe damage throughout the facility. Ten Lancasters failed to return, all claimed by Nachtjagd; three by 28-year old Oberstleutnant Walter Borchers of Stab NJG5 a Ritterkreuzträger (29 October 1944) for his 22nd-24th victories. He had scored his first victory, a Morane on 17 May 1940. Hauptmann Gerhard Raht of Stab NJG2 claimed a Lancaster for his 43rd victory at 2009 hours. Oberfeldwebel Ludwig Schmidt of 2/NJG6 flying a Ju 88G claimed two Lancasters including PD388 on 625 Squadron, which crashed in the Eifel region killing the skipper, Flying Officer Herbert William Hazell DFC and four of the crew.

The two other crew were taken prisoner. Hauptmann Werner Möring of III./NJG5 claimed his first victory and only victory. Oberleutnant Karl Teufert of IV./NJG5 claimed a Lancaster destroyed at Halle for his first and only victory. He was killed on 16/17 January making a failed force landing at Schkeuditz airfield due to combat damage. Leutnant Werner Artus of I./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster south of Leuna for his first victory. He was injured in a crash on 28/29 January as a result of icing. Leutnant Theodor Adamski of III./NJG1 claimed a 'Lanki' for his third victory. He was killed on 8/9 March when he bailed out of his Bf 110G-4 at too low a level at the Möhne Dam, after colliding with balloon cables, while being chased by a Mosquito.

On two other Main Force raids, on Grevenbroich and Dülmen one Halifax was lost. The first of two enemy aircraft shot down during January by Flight Lieutenants Kenneth D. Vaughan and Robert D. MacKinnon on 85 Squadron took place that same night during a High Level Patrol supporting the attack on the Leuna plant. They were on the last leg of their patrol when MacKinnon reported a contact 4½ miles at 11 o'clock. Vaughan chased and caught the target and closed in to 100 feet directly beneath to identify it. He could see by its pointed wings and under-slung engines that it was a Ju 188. Vaughan increased range to 600 feet and fired a one-second burst dead astern, which produced a large explosion in the starboard engine. He pulled away to starboard but seeing no further results followed again with MacKinnon on AI and closed in to 900 feet where he fired a two-second burst. Results were inconclusive so he closed in to 600 feet and fired another one-second burst. This time strikes could be seen and there was an explosion in the starboard engine again. Pieces flew past the Mosquito and then the Ju 188 disappeared straight down to explode on ground at 2143 hours. Explosions lit up the countryside and the Mosquito cockpit was illuminated by a large orange glow. Their victim was possibly Ju 88G-1 05+EP of Stab NJG3, which crashed three kilometres southeast of Friedberg. Oberfeldwebel Johann Eels, with no victories, Unteroffizier Richard Zimmer, radar operator and Gefreiter Werner Hecht, bordschütze were killed. Flight Lieutenant B. Brearley and Flying Officer J. Sheldon on 141 Squadron on Mosquito VI HR294/T also destroyed a UEA at Jüterborg. A He 219 was lost in air combat eight kilometres east of Hamm and another 'Owl' was shot down in air combat nine kilometres north of Münster in the Sprakel/Gelmer area. Leutnant Reinhold Lehr and Obergefreiter Albert Leukam were killed.[117]

On the 15th a benzol plant at Recklinghausen was the target for over eighty Lancasters and again the bombing appeared to be 'excellent' and no aircraft were lost. Another sixty plus Lancasters attacked the Robert Muser benzol plant at Bochum and again all aircraft returned. The night of 15/16th January was another high-scoring affair for Nachtjagd with claims for 24 Viermots. Walter Borchers scored another three victories to take his score to 27. Hauptmann Werner Hopf of 8./NJG5 claimed three Halifaxes for his 19-21st victories. (He fled to Dübendorf in Switzerland on 30 April where he was interned). Hauptmann Dietrich Schmidt of 8./NJG1 claimed

his 39th victory, a Lancaster northeast of Frankfurt-am-Oder. Leutnant Hans Schäfer of IV./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster and a Halifax. Leutnant Joachim Sommerau of III./NJG1 claimed two Halifaxes; his first and second Abschüsse. Oberfeldwebel Rudolf Mangelsdorf claimed two Halifaxes south and southwest of Hanover and Oberleutnant Hans-Heinrich Breitfeld, two Halifaxes also for his 7th and 8th Abschüsse. He was killed on 9 April in a crash landing at Lübeck airfield.

On the very cold night of 16th/17th when snow lay unusually deep, just over 370 aircraft destroyed 44 per cent of the built-up area of Magdeburg when four separate targets were hit this cold winter's night. Seventeen Halifaxes failed to return from the raid on Magdeburg but only one Lancaster failed to return from the raid on the synthetic oil plant at Brüx in Czechoslovakia. The Krupp benzol plant at Wanne-Eickel was also attacked, by 138 Lancasters. No results were known and one Lancaster was lost. Another 328 Lancasters caused much damage to the northern half of the Braunkphle-Benzin synthetic oil plant at Zeitz near Leipzig. That night Flight Lieutenant Kenneth D. Vaughan and Flight Sergeant Robert Denison MacKinnon on 85 Squadron claimed another victory, a He 219'Uhu'. Manoeuvrable and with a service ceiling of 37,000 feet the 'Owl' was the only Luftwaffe piston-engined night-fighter capable of taking on the Mosquito on equal terms. During the first ten days of operations in June 1943 at Venlo and Münster the 'Owl' claimed six Mosquitoes destroyed (plus claims for 25 Viermots). The He 219A-6 was an anti-Mosquito version of the He 219A-2 which was lightened by removing all engine and ammunition tank armour and oblique armament and the reduction in armament from six to four 20mm MG 151/20 cannon. Performance was further improved by the installation of a nitrous oxide fuel injection system to its engines giving a top speed of 670 km/h at 23,000 feet. But by the time the first He 219A-6 Mosquito hunters were delivered, use of the 'Uhu' against the 'Wooden Wonder' had officially been banned.

'Owl' crews like Leutnant Otto Fries and his bordfunker, Feldwebel Fred Staffa in 2./NJG1 at Münster-Handorf were well aware of the ever-present danger Mosquitoes posed on ground attack sorties and in the air. 'The Mosquito was an excellent aircraft and the 'Serrate' homer was unsurpassed but during this phase the SN-2 suffered constantly from interference. Almost every week one of us was shot down! But relatively few crews were lost as the Katapultsitzen' (ejection seat) of the He 219 (provided it had not been damaged) made exit easy when the red button was pushed.'

Fries had been credited with ten confirmed night kills in the period August 1943-April 1944, plus two unconfirmed Abschüsse in daylight, a B-17 on 17 August and a P-47 on 14 October 1943. Although he was a respected 'Experten', Fries was under no illusions. 'Our operations were hopeless, depressing and mostly unsuccessful. Even before we were ordered to cockpit readiness, the duty long range night-fighter was around our base. When we heard the noise of his Rolls-Royce engines, that typical high-pitched sound, we knew that a half hour later at most we would be

driving out to the dispersals. There was a deathly silence in the crew bus, which took us out to our machines. Each of us tried to cope with the thought of the forthcoming operation in our own way. We thought about the Mosquitoes, which made us the hunters, the hunted. The boarding of our machines, the donning of rubber life jacket, parachute, helmet, throat microphone and the tightening of the straps took place in complete silence. Then, the unnerving wait, the gut churning anticipation; the 'arse-twitch' as we called it.'

On 16/17 January they discovered to their cost that the killer 'Katze' certainly was no prowling pussycat. Somewhere east or northeast of Cologne their He 219A-0 (G9+EK) suffered oxygen failure. Fries wanted to go down to 1000 to 1500 metres in order to get below the dreaded Moskito 'Intruders' but Staffa told him that almost all of the transmitters were suffering interference and the lower they got would make it more difficult to get a bearing. 'Stay at 4000 until I know where we are and am able to give you a course for Münster. Then you can do as you like' Staffa said. Fries levelled off at 3500 metres, trimmed the 'Uhu' and went onto a northerly heading where he assumed their home base was. Finally, after some difficulty Staffa managed to get a bearing from a strong radio beacon and then he picked up Münster-Handorf but the intercom had failed. Fries was unable to hear his funker shout through the roar of the engines: 'Long-range night-fighter!' but off to his right and about twenty metres higher, Fries saw a Mosquito rush past. 'What a fool,' went through his head. 'Never heard about speed adjustment? Now I'll show you how it's done!'

Their attacker was a Mosquito 'Intruder' flown by Flight Lieutenant Kenneth D. Vaughan and Flight Sergeant Robert Denison MacKinnon on 85 Squadron. Fries turned the gun switch with his left hand and the breeches rattled. His hand reached for the control column and his index finger sought the trigger. As he tried to move the stick back and forth to raise the nose to let the Moskito pass through the sights there was no response. The elevator control cables had evidently been shot through. Fortunately, the ailerons were still working. The 'Owl' began pitching. It went up, lost speed and nosed down, gaining speed as it did so and then did it again. Fries tried to counteract this with the throttles and then he tried trim but it was clear that he would not be able to land the aircraft. At some point he and Staffa would have to bail out. The pitching caused a loss of height and when the altimeter reached the 1000 metre mark Fries knew it was time to get out. He closed both throttles and shouted, 'Get out!' The 'Owl' dropped immediately and Fries opened the throttles to recover. Fries turned the safety lever on the 'Katapultsitzen' on the right-hand ledge and placed his feet in the 'stirrups', released the throat microphone and tore his helmet off. He pulled the cord securing the torch around his neck over his head and let it drop to the cabin floor because in the slipstream after ejection it could cause injury. Then he jettisoned the canopy and waited for the 'bang', which would indicate that his bordfunker had ejected. As soon as Fries heard this, he struck the release button with his fist and was blown out. He was caught in the slipstream, which hurled him about. Fries

released the straps and got clear of the seat and then waited two more seconds before pulling the ripcord. The parachute opened and he pulled a signal pistol from his right-hand pocket of his trousers, loaded a parachute flare from the ammunition belt strapped to his left boot, and the bright light of the magnesium flare revealed his bordfunker below. Both men drifted slowly across a coppice towards a clearing, which opened up like a funnel and a village within it. Fries fired off two more flares, which lit up their landing like day. Fries, who landed in a tree, had suffered a very painful right knee which appeared to be swelling but he lowered himself to the ground where the snow broke his fall. Next morning a car took Fries and Staffa back to their airfield. Fries' knee had swollen so much that he had to cut open the stitching of his uniform breeches. Both men recovered and they would add another eight night Abschüsse whilst flying the He 219, ending the war with eighteen confirmed victories.

On 16/17 January also, Flight Lieutenant Tommy Smith and Flying Officer 'Cocky' Cockayne, a Mosquito intruder crew of 23 Squadron were on ops in their Mosquito FB.VI. Smith, who was within two or three operations of completing his second tour, recalls:

'It was a dirty night - thick as a bag up to 16,000 feet - and we went on an ASH patrol to Stendal fighter airfield near Berlin. I used a square search system for nearly an hour but picked up nothing and when the time was up, we set course for home. At the point when we should have been over the area of the Steinhuder Lake, we came across an airfield where aircraft with nav lights on were taxiing. This was unheard of. I went in to have a bash. There was a chap sitting at the taxi point. He was my target: his nav lights and the hooded runway lights were on. I opened up and saw a good cluster of cannon strikes on the aircraft and was about to break away when I saw exhaust flames of another aircraft half way up the runway. 'God, someone's taking off! I'll have him,' I thought. (I was trained to recognize an aircraft by the number, type and disposition of its exhaust flames and I reckoned it was a Ju 88.) So instead of breaking off; I closed in and opened up. My muzzle flashes lit up the Hun right under my chin! (I was so close I was practically looking at the back of the pilot's head.) It wasn't a Ju 88; it was a Me 109! (What I had taken for exhausts of two engines were the flames from either side of one engine.) Because of the difference in line between my gunsight and the guns beneath my feet, I was shooting low, being so close and ripped the bottom out of the Me 109. He crashed at the end of the runway.

'However, as I was pursuing this chap, I had passed between two flak towers at the downwind end of the runway. Light flak [from eight guns, the Germans said later] had the cannon flashes to aim at and my Mosquito was hit coming in over the perimeter track at a height of about 200 feet in a dive. Flak set my right engine on fire and I automatically feathered the prop and pressed the extinguisher button. I zoomed up to 1,000 feet. My mind was running on how to get organized to fly home on one engine, when, all of a sudden the other engine stopped! The first engine was blazing merrily and the prop was feathering and un-feathering. I said to

Cocky, 'That's it! Bail Out!' It's not easy to get out of a Mosquito. Cocky was having trouble jettisoning the hatch door. Time and height were running out. I switched on the landing lights. Treetops showed up below. We were too low. I shouted, 'Knock it off. Do your harness up. Cocky didn't answer. A burst of flame lit up the open hatch. He had bailed out. I found out later that his parachute didn't open fully and he had broken his neck.

'The forest came up and I was skimming over the treetops and preparing to stuff the nose in while I still had flying speed. I could feel the 'whiffle' which indicated the approach of the stall. Suddenly, there was a field covered in snow. I stuffed it in at about 200 mph. Next thing; I was hurtling along the ground heading for more trees. I thought it was a wood but it was only a line of trees; a windbreak! The trees ripped off the outer wing sections and something, possibly a stump, knocked a hole in the cockpit alongside me. I still had my hand on the throttle control and it was ripped away by the tree stump! Then I was out of the trees and into the snow again before the aircraft came to a stop. A feeling of relief came over me. All I could think was 'a forced landing in the dark! What fantastic luck to be alive!'

'All I had to do now was lift the roof emergency hatch, climb out and run away. Except that in the crash, the whole of the seat had come adrift and shot me underneath the instrument panel and the cockpit cabin was full of earth. The left rudder bar had taken my foot back under the seat and locked it. I had some grim moments trapped in the middle of a bonfire trying to extricate my foot. By the time I got out of the hole the port radiator and its contents were burning fiercely right outside the hole. I crawled out badly burned and stuffed my face and hands into the snow. When I got up, I found I had a broken leg, caused by the rudder pedal. [He had also lost an eye]. By the light of the fire I could see a farmhouse and crawled over to it. Two soldiers hiding in the hedge, expecting the bombs to explode, carried me into the barn and about an hour later a Luftwaffe ambulance from Fassberg collected me. I was sadly aware that my wartime flying was over.'

In January 2nd TAF and 100 Group Mosquito night fighters claimed over thirty Luftwaffe aircraft. During January-February Reichsverteidigung Nachtjagd crews flew 1,820 sorties, claiming 302 victories against the odds - 117 in January and 185 in February. But Nachtjagd lost 94 aircraft in the same period and the majority of the crews flying them. The German night-fighter arm was slowly but steadily bleeding to death. Successes on the night of 28/29 January were few when 602 RAF Viermots attacked the Stuttgart area for the loss of six Lancasters, four Halifaxes and a Mosquito. Nachtjagd claimed six 'Lanki's destroyed, four of them by Feldwebel Günther Bähr for his 25-28th victories. The two other Abschüsse were credited to Oberfeldwebel Ludwig Schmidt of 2./NJG6 and 27-year old Hauptmann Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich of Stab I/NJG6 who claimed a Lancaster south of Wildbad for his 21st victory.

On 1/2 February Nachtjäger claimed ten Lancasters and a Mosquito when the Main Force attacked Ludwigshafen and, Mainz and Siegen. Six

Lancasters were lost on Ludwigshafen. Three 'Lankis' and the Mosquito which was claimed west of Waibstadt by Oberfeldwebel Alfred Siewert of Stab II./NJG6 flying Ju 88G-6 621422 failed to return from the raid on Siegen. Flight Lieutenant Ronald Baker and Sergeant Douglas George Betts on 627 Squadron flying B.IV DZ627 AZ-X were killed. Siewert, who was wounded in the combat encounter, bailed out. Oberfeldwebel Heinz Fischer and Flieger Albert Schach were wounded also; Oberfeldwebel D. Burkhard and Feldwebel Bernhard Mlotek were killed. In all, II./NJG6 claimed seven Lancasters; two 'Lankis' each being claimed by Hauptmann Helmuth Schulte and Oberleutnant Johannes Engels. Major Hans Karlewski of Stab NJG2 also claimed two Lancasters.

The following night Bomber Command attacked Wiesbaden, Wanne-Eickel and Karlsruhe in some force. Three Lancasters of the Wiesbaden force crashed in France. PB807 on 460 Squadron RAAF piloted by Flying Officer John Maguire RAAF was credited to Leutnant Wolfgang Brettschneider of 6/NJG4 for his second victory. His Ju 88G-6 was shot down by return fire from the Lancaster before it crashed at Riedelbach near Bad Homburg and he was killed. Maquire and five of his crew were killed. Flight Sergeant R. H. Whiticar was the only survivor and he was taken prisoner. Four Halifaxes were lost on Wanne-Eickel. At Karlsruhe fourteen Lancasters were lost, eight of them claimed by six Nachtjäger. Three were claimed by Oberleutnant Engelbert Heiner of Stab II./NJG6.

RAF Mosquitoes were finding victories hard to come by. On 14/15 February Bomber Command attacked Chemnitz and an oil refinery at Rositz near Leipzig. Pilot Officer Leslie George 'Dutch' Holland and his navigator Flight Sergeant Robert 'Bob' Young on 515 Squadron, returning from a 'Night Intruder' patrol in Mosquito FB.VI 'D-Dog' to Hailfingen airfield in the area east of Stuttgart had a low-level encounter with a He 219 as Holland recalls:

'After we had mooched around the vicinity of the airfield for the best part of an hour Bob announced that he thought there was something on the 'Monica'. A port turn caused an increase in range whereupon I immediately opened the taps and made the turn as steep as possible. The blip disappeared so we started a starboard turn to make a sweep. A head-on contact came up on the ASH at about two miles closing fast. As he appeared to be on a parallel course slightly right we went straight into a hard right turn. The bogey must have done exactly the same because he failed to appear on our screen after the turn. I reversed course again and had another go. Sure enough, another head-on. Port turn this time and we lost him again. Suddenly, Bob yelled into the intercom, 'He's coming in from.'

'WHOOSH and a Heinkel 219 flashed by under our nose about twenty feet away - the radar operator clearly visible in the after part of the canopy. There was no time to depress the nose and have a squirt, not even to get the ginger on the button. And he was in a 600 bank to his right going to my left so he probably had Lichtenstein radar with all-round performance superior to our miserable little ASH. Our only course was to try and outguess him and at the same time bear in mind that we have now been

making inroads at full throttle into our get-home fuel. We made a sweep and tried to make a bit of westing but a break in the clouds revealed that the North Star was to port. I had been steering by the directional gyrocompass and it had spun in the tight turns. A quick look at the compass which had just about settled down confirmed the 'astro' observation and we were actually working our way deeper into enemy territory. Obviously our adversary had been expecting us to do exactly as we had intended so we must have ended up going in opposite directions at a separating speed of something over 500 mph. We never saw each other again, which may be just as well considering the performance of his mount and the great superiority of his radar.'[118]

By this stage of the war Germany was pinning its faith in revolutionary new aircraft such as the Me 163 'Komet' rocket fighter and jet powered types like the He 162 Salamander and turbojet-powered Heinkel 219V-14 'Owl'. At night identification was proving difficult as Flight Lieutenant G. C. Chapman and Flight Sergeant 'Jimmy' Stockley on 85 Squadron found on 20/21 March during a high-level escort of the bombers to Böhlen in NF.XXX NT324/I. Their first claim while en route to patrol was not difficult to identify. Their first 'Perfectos' contact appeared at 0255 hours just after passing Hamm at twelve miles range and 12,000 feet. Chapman closed range to one mile but no AI contact was obtained and the range began increasing again so he carried out a hard diving turn to port and down to 9,000 feet where the target was found at seven miles range. The Mosquito men closed to six miles range and an AI contact was obtained at 6 o'clock. The target was climbing and they closed rapidly, obtaining a visual at 900 feet, height 13,000 feet. It was a Bf 110 with pale blue light between the starboard nacelle and fuselage. Chapman closed to 600 feet and pulled up to dead astern when the 110 started to turn to port. He gave it a o-ring deflection and a three-second burst whereupon the German aircraft exploded in the port engine with debris flying back and it exploded on the ground at 0305 hours 25-30 miles northwest of Kassel. Chapman reported that, 'all this excitement was too much for the 'Perfectos', which went u/s unfortunately, so we set course for the rendezvous with the bomber stream.'

Chapman and Stockley reached the bomber stream at 0322 hours. Their patrol was uneventful until the stream left the target at 0400 hours when Chapman noticed to port and fifteen miles south a ball of yellowish flame taking off [from Plauen airfield] and climbing very rapidly. He thought it was a flare or a V2 until it began emitting a meteor tail several hundred feet long. The Mosquito crew turned port towards it, lost height to 7,000 feet and continued watching. It travelled in a northwest direction very fast and suddenly to their astonishment fired off some rocket projectiles, four singles and one pair, in the general direction of the departing bomber stream. Chapman and Stockley were amazed and decided that it must be a Me 163. Chapman continued turning port and got behind the unidentified enemy aircraft, which by now was travelling at about 260 mph. With Stockley using the AI to check range Chapman closed to 1,000 feet and

visually identified a twin-engined aircraft with rocket apparatus slung under the fuselage. They realized that it was a He 219 but it was no ordinary 'Owl'. It was a He 219V-14 'Uhu' of 3./NJG1 which carried a BMW 109-003 turbojet, used in the He 162 Salamander programme, below the fuselage. And it was being flown by Oberleutnant Heinz Oloff, Staffelkapitän, 3./NJG1 who had been shot down flying a He 219A-2 on New Year's Eve by Paul Mellows and 'Dickie' Drew!

Considerable quantities of flames and sparks flying back prevented Chapman and Stockley from identifying the tail unit so Chapman decided to open fire at long range. He gave the 'Owl' several longish bursts as two of his cannon had stoppages and he was gratified to see an explosion take place somewhere in the fuselage and debris fly back. Oloff knew from experience that it was time to bail out. He shouted to Helmut Fischer, 'Get Out! Get Out! The 'Katapultsitzen' safety lever was 'up' and Oloff placed his feet in the 'stirrups'. Then he disconnected the throat microphone and took off his helmet. He jettisoned the canopy and waited for the bang that indicated that Fischer had ejected. When he heard this Oloff immediately hit the red firing button of his Katapultsitzen' (ejection seat) with his fist and was blown out of the aircraft. The slipstream seized him immediately and tossed him about. He released the harness and separated from the seat and then waited a few seconds and pulled the parachute handle. The parachute opened immediately. Oloff looked around and he could see his bordshütze's parachute below. Both men watched as they saw the 'Owl' nose straight down through the patchy cloud and explode on the ground with a tremendous glare.

On 21 March 1,000lb bombs fell on the night fighter airfield at Münster/Handorf and on the following day it was continually strafed for four hours. Seven 'Uhu's of I./NJG 1 were destroyed and another thirteen seriously damaged. On 29 March Unteroffizier Adam Holl and his radio/radar operator Helmut Walter took off from Dortmund airfield to fly to Hildesheim. Their aircraft was a He 219A-5, in which they could not have had much experience. Why the transfer flight was conducted in broad daylight is not known, but what is certain is that at 1230 hours the night fighter was intercepted by American fighters. The Heinkel had no chance - the machine and its crew were reported missing. The Gruppe were to be transferred immediately to Bremen-Neulandsfeld to continue operations, but it lacked airfield lighting and was therefore unsuitable for night combat flying. On 1 April I. Gruppe moved to Westerland on the island of Sylt. Twenty-nine days later the Gruppe, or rather, I. Staffel as it had been renamed received orders to disband. All personnel were to take part in the final battle for Schleswig and Husum as infantry. The war however, would end before the former night fighter personnel could reach 'the grey town by the sea'.

Endnotes Chapter 9

115 Consolidated B-24 Liberator on 10 August 1943.
116 *Air War Over Denmark.*
117 Whether this was the same aircraft claimed by Flight Lieutenant Crafts on 274 Squadron is uncertain. In any case, while Flying Tempest V EL762 he attacked a He 219 near Hamm and saw it going down eight kilometres to the east of the town. If it was the same aircraft, then pilot Leutnant Lehr must have regained control of his machine and flown 50 kilometres before crashing on approach to Handorf airfield. Heinkel He 219; *An Illustrated History of Germany's premier Nightfighter* by Roland Remp (Schiffer, 2000).
118 On 15/16 April 1945 Holland and Young destroyed a Ju 52/3M near Schleissheim in FB.VI PZ398/C.

Chapter 10
Vesuvius

Our proud bomber formations in the West had sunk lamentably. Some of them were sent to the Eastern Front and the rest were decimated night after night without receiving sufficient reinforcements. The Allies had won air supremacy not only over the British Isles but also over German territory.

***Duel Under The Stars* by Wilhelm Johnen**

Aboard the Ju 188E-1 of KG200's Kommando 'Olga' Obergefreiter Heinz Hauck, his observer Gefreiter Kurt Wuttge and Unteroffizier Max Grossman, bordfunker were growing anxious. Hauck had taken off from Rhein-Main and had set course for Holland. There was no Main Force activity on the night of 23/24 January 1945 but the German crew were not interested in meeting any Viermots. They were on a clandestine mission to drop two agents near Gilze Rijen in the liberated part of Holland. Feldwebel Heinrich Hoppe, the dispatcher waited patiently for the signal. He and the rest of the crew were wary of low-level raiders lurking in the clouds and the dark expanse of the inhospitable night and they wanted to complete the drop before heavy AA bursts and searchlights gave away their position to a prowling Mosquito 'Intruder'. Unfortunately for the crew of the Junkers their fate was already sealed. Wing Commander James D. Somerville DFC and Pilot Officer A. C. Hardy in NF.XIII MM456, who were returning from patrol, were directed by 'Rejoice', a GCI station towards the bogey, now six miles distant at 4,000 feet. On 20 October 1944 Somerville and D. G. Robinson his radar operator had been awarded the DFC. Then Somerville had been promoted Wing Commander and given command of 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF. His sixth victory had taken place in December and now he was determined to make it seven. Somerville reduced height and Hardy was assisted by 'Bricktile' and 'Laundry' GCI stations. Finally, three miles west of Diest the Nighthawk crew came upon Ju 188E-1 A3+QD now flying at 3,000 feet. Hardy had difficulty keeping their quarry out of the ground clutter on his AI.Mk.VIII scope at their height of 2,500 feet until finally he got a contact at two miles. Somerville closed to 1,500 feet for a positive identification. Satisfied, he closed still further and opened fire with his cannons at 200 feet. His first burst set fire to Hauck's port engine and the 20mm shells caused a brilliant explosion, which forced the Mosquito pilot, momentarily blinded, to break away. Somerville came in again for a second burst as Hauck desperately dived and stall turned in a vain attempt to extinguish the flames. Somerville's

second burst missed but his third ripped the Ju 188's port wingtip off and the enemy aircraft dived steeply into the ground. Hauck, Gefreiter Kurt Wuttge, Unteroffizier Max Grossman and Feldwebel Heinrich Hoppe bailed out and were taken prisoner.

Another 'Nighthawk' crew meanwhile, claimed a Ju 88S-3 from either 1./KG66 or Lehrgeschwader 1 which were carrying out bombing and mining operations against Allied river traffic in the Scheldt estuary in an attempt to stem the flow of supplies to Antwerp. LG1 lost three Ju 88s including L1+GK flown by Gruppenkommandeur, Hauptmann Paul Hecking and L1+NP piloted by Oberleutnant Johan Huber, Staffelführer 6./LG1. One of these was claimed by Pilot Officers M. G. Kent and Simpson on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF in NF.XIII MM466 over the mouth of the Scheldt. On 3/4 February Kent and Simpson downed a Ju 88. That same night about a half dozen 'Uhus' of I./NJG1 were circling over 'Gemse' ('Chamois') a radio beacon near Krefeld and Mönchengladbach, waiting for Viermots reported heading for the Ruhr. At the controls of G9+WH was twenty-year-old Unteroffizier Karl Heinrich Thurow. Sitting behind him in his ejection seat was the bordshütze, 22-year old Gefreiter Neffe. Thurow had been maintaining an altitude of about 8500 metres for about fifteen minutes, constantly changing course, height and speed - the standard anti-Mosquito procedure. Without warning his 'Uhu' was suddenly raked by cannon fire. The port engine immediately burst into flames. The attacker was Mosquito NF.XXX MT281 on 410 Squadron RCAF at Amiens-Glisy in France crewed by Flight Lieutenant B. N. Plumer DFC and Flight Lieutenant Hargrove. Thurow put the damaged He 219 into a turn and dived away. Plumer followed the He 219 however and at 18,000 feet he was forced to abandon the pursuit because his protesting Mosquito was exceeding the 503 mph mark. Thanks to the He 219's diving ability, Thurow was able to elude his pursuer. He extinguished the fire and set course for Handorf on one engine. When the compressed air system for the ejection seats and then the hydraulics went out, Thurow realized that he would have to make a belly landing, which proved successful. Thurow and Neffe climbed out of their battered but repairable machine. As they did so they saw another Heinkel approaching the airfield. The pilot of the aircraft was attempting a wheels-up landing, but it suddenly lost altitude, crashed and exploded.

The early months of 1945 saw a tremendous increase in Bomber Command's operations, both in tempo and number, forty raids being mounted in February alone. That same month Nachtjagd flew 772 sorties and claimed 181 Abschüsse for the loss of 47 fighters. On the night of 1/2 February 100 Group and 2nd TAF Mosquitoes shot down eighteen German aircraft at night and probably destroyed one other. Oberleutnant Jacob Schaus of Stab II/NJG4 was shot down and killed during aerial combat with a Mosquito on 239 Squadron, crashing at Rockenhausen near Bad Kreuznach. Schaus had 23 Abschüsse.

Flight Lieutenants Paul Mellows and 'Dickie' Drew on 169 Squadron, attached to 'B' Flight. 85 Squadron of 100 Group, were airborne this night on a High-Level Support patrol to Stuttgart. Mellows arrived at their patrol

point and after ten minutes proceeded in a north-westerly direction. A red star cartridge was fired some way off to the north so he proceeded to investigate. Losing height to 10,000 feet a head-on contact was obtained and after being once lost was converted to an intermittent visual on a blue light at 2,000 feet range, height then being 11,000 feet. Mellows closed on AI to 1,000 feet where 'Dickie' Drew identified it as a Bf 110 with the aid of night glasses. It was being flown by thirty-year old Stabsfeldwebel Paul Faden of 2/NJG6 who had one victory, a Hampden on 3 December 1942. 'He was climbing and weaving 30° each side of course' continues Mellows. 'We closed to 200 feet to confirm and I opened fire at 300 feet from slightly below with a two-second burst from which, a small explosion sent debris flying back. A second burst resulted in a very large explosion and for a few moments the Mosquito was enveloped in flame, the heat of which was felt in the cockpit. We broke to starboard and watched enemy aircraft in the light of which a black cross and all details of the aircraft were plainly visible. I felt that we must have hit a partially empty drop tank because after the explosion the Bf 110 continued to fly straight and level for some time. A further explosion occurred whilst it was going down and it eventually exploded on the ground at 1910 hours. As combat had affected rudder control, the patrol was terminated.'

Mellows fired 72 rounds of SAPI (Semi Armour Piercing Incendiary) and 68 rounds of HEI (Heavy Explosive Incendiary) to down the Bf 110. Mellows and Drew's victim crashed ten kilometres northwest of Waldemuhlenbach near Heilbron. Faden bailed out and was wounded.[119] 'When we got back' continues Mellows 'another member of the squadron said he had seen the aircraft burning and had thought he might go and shoot at it. However, it plunged to earth before he got to it. The Sergeant in charge of the camera guns at Swannington had fixed an overrun switch to the gun button so that the camera continued to operate for several seconds after one had taken the finger off the gun button. He said that a number of frames on the film were completely exposed but he had to send them up to Fighter Command for verification and the person in charge there would not believe it and accused him of shining a torch into the camera to improve the effect. The result was that much of the film was cut out. However, we went on leave and when I came back there did not seem to be any point in remonstrating with the gentlemen of Fighter Command. We went to the BSDU where there were boffins inventing forms of radar for intercepting night fighters. We were allowed to fly when and where we wished but by March 1945 there weren't many German night fighters around and we had no more luck.'

Oberleutnant Gottfried Hanneck of 5./NJGl, who had been shot down by an 85 Squadron Mosquito flown by Flight Lieutenant 'Bill' House and Flight Sergeant 'Bob' MacKinnon on 13/14 September 1944 returned to combat operations at Düsseldorf airfield with a new crew of Feldwebel Pean, bordshütze and Unteroffizier Glockner, bordmechaniker on Bf 110G-4 G9+CN. They were one of a number of crews ordered to fly to several night fighter beacons and wait there at the height at which the bombers

were expected to fly in. Hanneck received orders to take-off at 1945 hours, proceed to a beacon in the Frankfurt area and wait for any reports of enemy aircraft movements. They flew around in wide circles and figures of eight and waited for the enemy reports which did not reach them. Suddenly, they were completely surprised by a Mosquito, flown either by Squadron Leader Ryall and Pilot Officer Mulroy on 157 Squadron who claimed a Bf 110 'probable' at Oberolm or Wing Commander Walter Frame Gibb DSO DFC 239 Squadron CO and Flying Officer R. C. Kendall DFC who destroyed a Bf 110 at Mannheim. The Bf 110 was hit by a short burst of fire, the intercom was put out of action and the landing light in the wing came on. Hanneck stood the aircraft on its nose to avoid a second attack and to find shelter in a layer of clouds beneath. His crew, who could not contact Hanneck, must have assumed he was hit as he was slumped over the control column. They bailed out and landed safely. Hanneck managed to crash-land the 110 in a 'snow-white' field two kilometres west of Kettenhausen in the Westerwald. His face slightly hit the gun sights but he was able to scramble out of his seat and shout for help. A farmer came to his aid and on his horse-drawn sleigh took him to the nearest Army post where he received first aid and large quantities of Cognac as a remedy for the shock and pain. Then he was transported to the nearest hospital at Wissen on the Sieg.'

On 2/3 February Bomber Command mounted raids on Mannheim, Wanne Eickel, Wiesbaden and Karlsruhe by 1,200 aircraft, about 250 being ordered to raid Karlsruhe. Due to adverse weather conditions and extensive Luftwaffe night fighter activity near and over the targets operations were only partially successful. Twenty-one aircraft failed to return, including eleven from the Karlsruhe force and another thirteen crashed in liberated French territory. Stab and I./NJG6 crews flying Ju 88s claimed nine Lancasters destroyed over and around Karlsruhe 2320-2340 hours. Five Lancasters crashed in the area around the town of Bruchsal, north-east of Karlsruhe (three on 189 Squadron - PB848 flown by Flight Lieutenant Norman Philip Blain RCAF crashed in a wood near Heidelsheim south of Bruchsal. All except the rear gunner were killed. Flight Sergeant Don Clement RCAF was blown from his turret by an explosion, which was possibly caused when the Lancaster was hit by flak making a second bomb run over the target with its bomb load still aboard. PB743 flown by Flight Lieutenant John Outram Davies exploded on its bombing run over Weingarten, southwest of Heidelsheim after dropping the 4,000 pounder and part of the load of incendiaries may have been hit by a 'Schräge Musik' equipped night-fighter. Flight Sergeant Les Cromarty DFM, crew tail gunner on his second tour, was the sole survivor when he was blown out of his turret and he landed by parachute. ME298/B on 463 Squadron came down at Unterowisheim nearby after being attacked by a night-fighter and possibly being hit by flak over Karlsruhe. Flying Officer Richard Kay Oliver RAAF and four crew were killed. They were buried in the British and Commonwealth war cemetery at Durnbach, as were six of the crew on PB840 skippered by Flying Officer William Desmond 'Ned' Kelly RAAF; the remains of which fell into a wood near Oberowisheim, northeast of

Bruchsal. Sergeant Ricky F. Dyson GM the rear gunner was the only survivor. It is believed that PB840 was shot down by Oberfeldwebel Heinrich Schmidt of 2./NJG6 at 2321 hours for his ninth Abschuss. The fifth Lancaster was PB306 on 467 Squadron RAAF which was shot down by Hauptmann Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich of Stab I./NJG6 at Karlsdorf at 2330. Twenty-five year old Flight Lieutenant Noel Sydney Caesar Colley husband of Frances Joan Colley, of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada and his seven crew - average age 21 - were killed.

On 7/8 February 239 Squadron Mosquito crews were prominent. This night Main Force targets included strong German defence positions at Goch and Kleve, which had to be smashed before an attack by the British XXX Corps across the German frontier near the Reichswald. The Dortmund-Ems Canal was also targeted and Mosquito bombers carried out raids on Magdeburg, Mainz and five other targets. Flight Lieutenant D. A. D. Cather DFM and Flight Sergeant L. J. S. Spicer BEM on 239 Squadron shot down Bf 110G-4 G9+HR of 7./NJG1, which crashed west of Soest in the Ruhr. Feldwebel Heinz Amsberg, who had four night victories and Unteroffizier Matthias Dengs, bordfunker were killed. Gefreiter Karl Kopperberg the bordschütze, who was wounded, bailed out.

Flight Lieutenant Anthony J. Holderness and Flight Lieutenant Walter Rowley DFC also returned triumphant to West Raynham as Holderness reported: 'We carried out the first part of our patrol at Zandvoort quite uneventfully before and while the targets, Kleve and Hussum were being bombed. Towards the end of the bombing we moved closer in to the targets and were doing a short 'square search' patrol when, at 2200 hours 13,000 feet, we got a contact at 2240 hours at about six miles range and heading towards the targets. It was only slightly above but difficult to close, as it was taking what appeared to be precautionary evasive action, diving and climbing through a series of steep turns. Throughout this part of the chase our altimeter was reading anything from 11,000 to 15,000 feet. Several times I caught sight of the exhausts glow but was unable against the starlit sky to hold them for-more than a few seconds at a time. After about ten minutes of this, when we had closed to 1,000 feet we suddenly found ourselves overshooting very fast and some way above and had to turn 60° to port, then back onto our original course to recover the blip. This time the contact was headed away from the target, flying on an easterly course and at a height of about 12,000 feet. The pilot must have thought either that there was no longer any need to evade, or that he had shaken us off because he was flying straight and level. We closed in fairly fast and from only about 200 feet below and behind identified as Me 110. I dropped back to about 250 yards and opened fire. Quite a lot of debris flew back past us and the port engine immediately caught fire. Then the nose came up and he went into steep climb, which I tried to follow, still firing. Although I throttled right back we were - rapidly overtaking him and had to pull away quickly to starboard. Just then he seemed to stall and flick over to port. I turned as slightly as our low airspeed would allow and saw him diving very steeply with the port engine now a mass of flame. My navigator could still see

burning pieces coming off when he went into the cloud. Almost simultaneously there was a terrific white flash which lit up the clouds. We followed through about 3,000 feet of cloud to come out at 4,000 feet on the altimeter and there it was, burning immediately beneath us and only about a mile from a white beacon flashing the letters 'LF'.'

Their victim, possibly was Ju 88G-6 R4+UB of 9./NJG5, which crashed at Stirnberg/Detmold. Unteroffiziers' Richard Ruckert, replacement pilot with no victories, Hans Meiller, bordfunker and Herbert Hoffmann, bordschütze were killed.

On 8/9 February Bomber Command returned to attacks on synthetic oil plants when Pölitz was bombed by 475 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes. Twelve Lancasters which failed to return were probably all victims of NJG2, NJG3 and NJG5. Leutnant Herbert Altner of 8./NJG5 claimed three Lancasters over Stettin. Wanne-Eickel and Krefeld were also attacked. There followed a series of minor operations involving Mosquito bombers mainly while the Main Force was grounded, 9-12/13 February. Bomber Command though was merely building up for an operation that has since gone down in history as one of the most controversial bombing raids of the war.

For most of the participating aircrew the Dresden raid on 13/14 February was another well executed and very efficient area bombing attack. Dresden was targeted as part of a series of particularly heavy raids on four German cities in Operation 'Thunderclap' with a view to causing as much destruction, confusion and mayhem as possible. Berlin, Chemnitz and Leipzig, which like Dresden, were vital communications and supply centres for the Eastern Front. 'Thunderclap' had been under consideration for several months and was to be implemented only when the military situation in Germany was critical. The campaign was to have started with an American raid on Dresden on 13 February but bad weather over Europe prevented any US involvement until the 14th. Dresden was to be bombed in two RAF assaults three hours apart, the first by 244 Lancasters of 5 Group and the second by 529 Lancasters of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. Flight Sergeant John Aldridge on 49 Squadron who flew 33 operations as a Lancaster bomb aimer September 1944-April 1945 and who took part in the 5 Group bombing of Dresden recalls:

'The plan of attack was as follows: 5 Group was to attack at 2215 hours on 13 February, using its own Path Finder technique to mark the target. This was a combination of two Lancaster Squadrons; 83 and 97, to illuminate the target and one Mosquito Squadron (627) to visually mark the aiming point with Target Indicators from low level. The aiming-point was to be a sports stadium in the centre' of the city situated near the lines of railway and river which would serve as a pointer to the Stadium for the Marker Force, especially since it was anticipated that visibility might not be too good. At 2213 hours 244 Lancasters, controlled throughout by the Master Bomber, commenced the attack and it was completed by 2231 hours. A second attack was timed for 0130 hours on the 14th by another 529 aircraft of Bomber Command.[120] Calculations were that a delay of three hours would allow the fires to get a grip on the sector (provided the first

attack was successful) and fire brigades from other cities would concentrate fighting the fires. In this second attack target marking was to be carried out by 8 Path Finder Group.

'By the time of this attack cloud cover had cleared to 3 to 7/10ths but despite this the Master Bomber could not identify the aiming point due to the huge conflagrations and smoke and a decision was made to concentrate bombing on areas not affected. An area was marked by the Path Finders both to the left and to the right to assist in concentrating the bombing and good concentration was achieved. So great were the conflagrations caused by the firestorms created in the great heat generated in the first attack that crews in the second attack reported the glow was visible 200 miles from the target. To assist the night operations of Bomber Command various 'spoof attacks were made by Mosquitoes on Dortmund, Magdeburg and Hannover and 344 Halifaxes attacked an oil plant at Böhlen near Leipzig at the same time as the first attack. In addition to the above the routing and. feints carried out by the Main Forces involved caused night fighter reaction to be minimal. In the case of the 5 Group attack our outward route consisted of no less than eight legs with feints towards the Ruhr, Kassel, Magdeburg and Berlin using 'Window' at the same time. An indication of the effectiveness of these operations was that out of over 1,000 aircraft taking part only six were lost.' (Major Robert Hans Leickhardt, Kommandeur of II./NJG5 was probably the only Nachtjäger to make contact with the Dresden force; he claimed two Lancasters).

As tons of explosives plummeted from the sky, an 800°C firestorm similar to that created in Hamburg on 27/28 July 1943, tore through the heart of the Saxon capital, burning thousands of Dresdeners alive. An estimated 25,000 to 40,000 Germans died in Dresden. Oberleutnant Wilhelm 'Wim' Johnen, Staffelkapitän, 5/NJG1, described the horrors of Dresden:[121] '...the bomber formations appeared over the city and enveloped it in a single sea of flames by dropping phosphorus bombs. Hundreds remained stuck in the melting asphalt and were burnt alive like flaming torches. Hundreds jumped with their clothes on fire into the icy waters of the Elbe or into the nine feet deep water basins from which they could not clamber out. Those who could swim were dragged down into the depths by non-swimmers. The Exhibition grounds in the Dresden gardens were filled with refugees who had taken cover there when the sirens wailed. But even the lawns with their centuries old trees were sprayed with bombs and phosphorus canisters until a forest fire was raging. The burning city was again subjected at 2 o'clock in the morning with a second carpet of bombs, which transformed the centre' of the city into a ruined wilderness. The casualties that night are estimated at over 100,000. Most of the bodies could no longer be identified. The human remains were placed on huge steel platforms, sprinkled with petrol and burnt in the open air.'

One of the survivors, Friedericke Clayton, was nineteen years old when the bombing occurred. 'Rubble was all that remained from many buildings. I was at war service when the news came that Dresden had been bombed. I heard the sound of the planes. It was like a humming that gets louder and

louder. I still have nightmares about it. We were released from war service and allowed to go home. I lived about twelve miles out of the main town and luckily we weren't hit. On the train [home] I didn't know where I was, it looked like I had entered another country. The shock was tremendous; the smell of burning flesh - I still have it in my nostrils. It was a dull day and the clouds were still hanging over the city. I didn't see anybody, there was no life. It was a dead town, just rubble. It was just devastation and it was a hell of a shock to your system. When the British came down they set down what we called Christmas trees, because they were all lit up. Dresden had one main road, it was old fashioned; the buildings were made of wood and stone and things that burnt easily. Then the bombers came in two flights and killed 35,000 people. I lost an aunt and her daughter. On the second day of bombing, the animals broke out of the zoo and ran towards the river and so did the people running away from the fire. The aeroplanes, they had machine guns and they shot the animals and the people. One of my aunts, she lived near the main train station. She lost everything. Her husband was a teacher and she was a housewife. They tried to dig in the rubble to find something, anything, but found nothing. They eventually built their own house out of the debris. The girls that returned from war service with me, their houses were destroyed. It was very well organised with how it was bombed. It was meant for the city and the city was gone.'

In the night sky Flight Lieutenant 'Podge' Howard DFC and Flying Officer 'Sticky' Clay DFC of BSDU (Bomber Support Development Unit) were airborne from Swanton Morley, Norfolk in their Mosquito NF.XIX. Howard had joined 239 Squadron on 2 May 1944 and completed 32 operational sorties by 9 November 1944, during which he destroyed three enemy aircraft and damaged eight trains. During four other sorties he damaged eight trains in Holland and Germany. Their patrol of beacons, 'Kolibri' ('Humming bird'), 'Ida', 'Elster' ('Magpie'), 'Nachtigall' ('nightingale') and 'Otto' with AI.Mk.X and 'Serrate IV' proved very rewarding, as Howard reported:

'At 'Ida' a visual was obtained on an aircraft at 1,000 feet and at 600 feet was recognized as a Me 110 [Bf 110G-4 of 11./NJG1 crewed by Unteroffizier Gerhard Bauer and Unteroffizier Rudolf Seratin]. A short burst was fired but no strikes were seen. I increased deflection and fired another burst, which caused strikes all over starboard engine, wing root and starboard side of cockpit. A fire started in starboard wing root and the Me 110 turned over to port burning well and dived straight down and entered cloud. Shortly after, there was a vivid white explosion on the ground [southwest of Lippstadt near Benninghausen] at 2033 hours. [Bauer and Seratin were killed]. Two minutes after another Mark X contact appeared crossing starboard to port and above range 12,000. We turned after it and range closed fast. A visual was obtained on an aircraft at 1,000 feet and at 600 feet this was identified as another Me 110 in a port turn. I opened fire at 600 feet and missed and the Hun promptly rolled into a starboard bank during which he presented no deflection and he received a one-second burst, which caused strikes on the cockpit fuselage and port wing root. He then

dived away to starboard and we gave him another burst, which set his port engine on fire and caused bits to fly off. He dived vertically into cloud, burning very well. We had to pull up and out of our dive and we didn't see it hit the deck but he was well on fire. At 2040 hours at 5,000 feet we obtained yet another Mark X contact almost at once. Although we chased him in an easterly direction for about twenty minutes at full bore we could not overtake him so we decided he was very fortunate and returned to our patrol area and came back to base via 'Kolibri' and West Kappelle.'

Nachtjagd claimed fifteen Abschüsse on 14/15 February. Among the Experten who added to their scores were Major Werner 'Red' Hoffmann, who claimed a 'Fortress' southwest of Bad Kissingen (21 RCM sorties were flown without loss) and a Lancaster to take his tally to 47. Hauptmann Heinz Rökker of 2./NJG2 destroyed a Lancaster south of Fulda for his 55th Abschüsse. Major Herbert Lütje of Stab NJG6 claimed a Lancaster fifty kilometres northeast of Frankfurt-am-Maine for his 44th victory. Major Werner Husemann claimed a Halifax at Seeland Island and another Halifax at Moen Island for his 29th-30th kills. His first victim was probably Halifax II MZ793 ZA-X on 10 Squadron piloted by Pilot Officer John Grayshaw which crashed while on a 'Gardening' sortie, at Asmindrup in Denmark. Grayshaw and one of his crew were killed and are buried at Holbaek East churchyard, Zeeland. Halifax III MZ924 KN-D on 77 Squadron Flight Lieutenant John Prower Braund and crew were lost while mining in the Kadett Channel. (On the night of 12/13 January his twin brother, Flight Lieutenant Marwood Paul Braund and crew on Halifax III MZ812 KN-X on 77 Squadron had been lost without trace on a 'Gardening' operation). It is believed that KN-D was attacked at 2145 hours by a Ju 88G-6 night fighter piloted by Oberleutnant Herbert Koch of 1./NJG3 who claimed two Lancasters, forty kilometres northeast of Moen and 75 kilometres north of Bornholm for his 19th-20th victories.

Braund's aircraft crashed into the Smålandsfarvandet Sea south of the island of Sjælland killing the crew of seven. John Braund was found at Kobæk beach two kilometres from Skælskør on the island of Sjælland on 14 May and he was laid to rest in Skelskør cemetery on the same day. The body of the W/Op, Flight Sergeant Maurice Clive Eddleston was found washed ashore on the beach near Guldborg on 10 April and he was laid to rest in Brarup cemetery on the island of Falster on 13 April. Air Bomber Flying Officer Arthur Wood was found at Aletrup beach near Brarup on 24 April and was laid to rest on 26 April. Navigator Flying Officer James Ritchie was found washed ashore at Vesterhave beach near Karrebæksminde on the island of Sjælland on 7 May and was laid to rest at Svinø cemetery the next day. On the south western beach of the island of Bogø was found the body of air gunner, Sergeant Dennis Sydney Watson on 9 June. He was laid to rest in Bogø cemetery on 13 June. The body of rear gunner, Sergeant Ronald Edward Russell was found washed ashore on Knudsodde on 14 June and was laid to rest in Svinø cemetery on 20 June. The last to be laid to rest was flight engineer, Sergeant Raymond Leslie Leforte who on 23 July was found washed ashore on the beach near Sortesø Beach Hotel on the island of Falster. He was laid to rest in Stubbekøbing

cemetery on 26 July.

Twenty-four year old Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler claimed a 'Lanki' northwest of Chemnitz for his 34th Abschüsse. Hauptmann Herbert Koch of I./NJG3 claimed two. Flight Lieutenant F. D. Win RNZAF and Flying Officer T. P. Ryan RNZAF on 85 Squadron claimed a Ju 88 at Scwabish Hall airfield. Feldwebel Heinrich Schmidt of 5/NJG5 who was flying a Bf 110 was killed after being attacked by a Mosquito. His Messerschmitt exploded and burned on impact in the village of Binsdorf. Unteroffiziers E. Wohlan, bordfunker and A. Zunker, bordshütze also died. Another minelayer, a Lancaster on 626 Squadron, was claimed shot down on 18/19 December by Oberleutnant Heinz Reuter of IV./NJG3 when 21 Lancasters and four Halifaxes carried out 'Gardening' operations in the German Bight. Reuter also claimed a Halifax on 24/25 February for his twelfth victory.[122] The only other claim on 18/19 February was another Lancaster mine-layer on 626 Squadron by Hauptmann Johann Dreher of IV/NJG3 for his second victory.[123] Dreher, who had been born in München in 1920, had been a bomber pilot on the Eastern Front and became the Staffelkapitän of 5/KG53 in Russia. He had been awarded the Ritterkreuz on 5 April 1944. He was killed on 3/4 March on Unternehmen 'Gisela'.

The two consecutive nights, 20/21 and 21/22 February proved a profitable 24 hours for several German pilots. On the night of 20/21 February Nachtjagd claimed 23 Viermots when RAF Bomber Command dispatched just over 990 aircraft sorties to four Main Force targets: the southern half of Dortmund, the Rhenania Ossag refinery in the Reisholz district of Düsseldorf, another Rhenania Ossag refinery at Monheim and the Mittelland Canal. Including diversionary and minor operations aircraft, 1,283 sorties were flown. Twenty-one aircraft failed to return from these raids and a Liberator VI on 223 Squadron in 100 Group on Bomber Support crashed southeast of Dortmund. Worst hit was the Dortmund force, which lost fourteen Lancasters. Nachtjagd claimed 25 Abschüsse. Among the claimants were 23-year old Oberleutnant Georg Fengeler of II./NJG1 who destroyed two Lancasters for his tenth and eleventh victories and Leutnant Kurt Stocker of 8./NJG1 flying a Bf 110G-4 who claimed two Viermots for his first two Abschüsse. Stocker had survived a crash at Sittard, Holland on 17 December 1944. Hauptmann 'Nasen' Müller and Hans-Joachim Jabs each claimed two Viermots also. Unteroffizier Georg Matt of II./NJG4 who claimed a Viermot for his second and final victory was killed on 26 February south of Schwetzingen. Hauptmann Ulrich Schirrmacher of I./NJG1 claimed a Lancaster for his first victory. His Bf 110 was shot up by an Intruder south of Duisburg and he made a belly landing at the Dortmund airfield. He escaped uninjured. Unteroffizier Karl Grosser of 11./NJG1 claimed a Viermot at Dortmund for his third Abschüsse. Oberfeldwebel Robert Lüddeke of II./NJG2 claimed two Viermots for his 10th and 11th victories. Oberleutnant Bernhard Jungmann of Stab II/NJG5 claimed a Viermot for his third Abschüsse and Oberleutnant Kurt Matzak of Stab IV/NJG1 piloting a Bf 110 claimed a Lancaster 55 kilometres SSW of Dortmund for his twelfth Abschüsse.

On the night of 24/25 February there was no Main Force activity when Oberleutnant Matzak claimed a B-17 25 kilometres northwest of Düsseldorf. Fortress III HB805 BU-C on 214 Squadron flown by 27-year old Flying Officer Joseph Malpass Shorttle DFM had taken off from Oulton at 1915 hours on a 'Window' operation over Germany. The purpose of the raid was to make a diversionary sweep over the Ruhr whilst another 74 aircraft from training squadrons also lured German night fighters over Northern France to enable 63 Mosquitoes to attack Berlin, another eighteen to attack Neuss and a further three on 'Siren duties'. At 2008 hours, 20-30 kilometres West of Düsseldorf airfield Matzak set HB805's starboard inner engine on fire and the Fortress subsequently crashed in a field on the Viersen-Anrath road near the Niers Canal. Flight Lieutenant Leslie Gordon Fowler DFC the 23-year old navigator and Flight Sergeant Geoffrey James Edward Jennings DFC, the rear gunner, were the only ones to survive the crash. Fowler was wounded and taken to a German hospital. He died on 15 March and was buried in Zuidlaren General Cemetery. Jennings spent the rest of the war in PoW camps. Post-war Matzak was the first Lufthansa pilot to fly the Lockheed Super Constellation. Oberfeldwebel Walter Kreibaum of 7/NJG11flying a Bf 110 claimed a Lancaster northwest of Krefeld for his first victory. But the only Lancasters that were airborne this night were 35 aircraft that carried out minelaying in the Kattegat and off Norwegian ports so this might have been one of four Halifaxes on 462 Squadron RAAF that were lost on an operation ahead of the diversionary force to drop 'Window', bombs and incendiaries in a 'Spoof' raid on the Ruhr.

Hauptmann Josef Kraft of 12./NJG1claimed Halifax III MZ448 at Duisburg at 2015 hours. Flight Lieutenant Frederick Harold Ridgewell RAFVR the 23-year old pilot was killed as were Flying Officer Thomas Pawsey RAFVR the 23-year old Special Operator and husband of Margaret Louisa Pawsey of Prestwich, Lancashire and Sergeant George Edward Rolls the 23-year old air gunner and husband of Audrey Joan Rolls of Hereford, and Sergeant John George Lynch RAAF the 25-year old air gunner. The 20-year old flight engineer, Sergeant Robert Greenwell Hodgson RAFVR and the 25-year old Australian navigator, Flying Officer Wilhelm Julius Mann RAAF; the 36-year old air bomber, Flying Officer William Kenneth Watson RAFVR and the 29-year old WOp/AG, Flying Officer John Raymond Boyce RAAF were taken into captivity.[124] Thirty-seven year old Major Max Eckhoff of II/NJG2 flying a Ju 88G-6 and Oberleutnant Heinz Reuter of IV./NJG3 piloting a Bf 110 each claimed a Halifax apiece. Eckhoff was shot down on 16 March by a RAF night-fighter. He was killed when he bailed out too low but his three crew survived. Eckhoff had accumulated seventeen Abschüsse at the time of his death and Reuter had scored twelve victories by the end of the war.

Meanwhile, on the night of 21/22 February 1,110 bomber sorties were flown on Duisburg, the first and only large raid on Worms and the Mittelland Canal near Gravenhorst. German ground control identified the course and height of the bomber stream heading for Worms and before the heavies reached their target and succeeded in infiltrating fifteen Spitzenbesatzungen of NJG6 into the bomber stream in the area of

Mannheim-Worms. No jamming of their SN-2 sets was experienced and no Mosquitoes were encountered. Fourteen Lancasters were lost on Dortmund. Düsseldorf cost four Halifaxes and one Lancaster. Monheim resulted in the loss of two Halifaxes. Only the raid on the Mittelland Canal was without loss. In total 22 aircraft failed to return. From 2030 to 2058 hours eight Nachtjagd crews claimed 21 bombers destroyed in the target area. Oberfeldwebel Günther Bähr of 1./NJG6 flying Bf 110G 2Z+IH with Feldwebel Rehmer as bordfunker and Unteroffizier Riediger as bordschütze, shot down seven Lancasters of the Worms force on their bombing run to the target in quick succession. Hauptmann Adolf Breves of IV./NJG1 took off from Düsseldorf airfield at 0213 hours on 21 February in his Bf 110 and in a fifty-minute sortie claimed three aircraft in the Ruhr area to take his score to sixteen. Another Bf 110 pilot, Hauptmann Johannes Hager, Staffelkapitän, 6./NJG1 claimed six Halifaxes in seventeen minutes. Bordfunker Unteroffizier Walter Schneider who contributed to the last thirteen of Hager's victories, recalls:

'On 21 February we took off at 0024 hours. I soon spotted a Viermot, which our pilot shot down after a short chase at 0112 hours. On the outbound flight from Düsseldorf I managed to get hold of another one on my radar and this one was made to crash at 0123 hours. Later the same day, at 2248 hours we again received orders to take off. This time we had to fly in the direction of Duisburg. Soon we encountered the formation of bombers and we succeeded in shooting down six Viermots between 2309 and 2321 hours. By skilful use of the oblique cannon, my pilot was able to set the bombers on fire with short bursts into the engines. The crews thus had more time to safely bail out. After this exploit I was commissioned.'

Hauptmann Johannes Hager's six Viermots were his 40th-45th Abschüsse (all but six of his 45 claims were later confirmed) and he was awarded the Ritterkreuz. Hauptmann Heinz Rökker, Ritterkreuzträger and Staffelkapitän of 2./NJG2 also destroyed six (his 56th-61st kills) between 2046-2119 hours. Five of his Abschüsse were from the Mittelland Canal force. (Rökker was awarded the Eichenlaub on 12 March). Thirty-seven year old Major Max Eckhoff of II./NJG2, who had one victory, claimed five Lancasters. Eckhoff, who scored his seventh victory on the night of 24/25 February destroyed five Viermots on 5/6 March and five more Lancasters on 7/8 March. South of Duisburg Hauptmann Ulrich Schirrmacher and Feldwebel Franz Waldmann were circling in He 219 G9+TH searching for a target when they were attacked by a Mosquito. G9+TH was left badly damaged and unable to maintain altitude. Schirrmacher carried out a forced landing in which Waldmann was injured.

Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer had taken off from Gütersloh at 0105 hours on 21 February in Bf 110C G9+MD. Employing 'Schräge Musik' attacks delivered below the bombers in an Einsatz (sortie) lasting two hours nine minutes he shot down two Lancasters at 0153 and 0158 hours about 11,000 feet WSW of Mönchengladbach-southwest of Roermond to take his score to 109. After shooting down the two Lancasters over Dortmund and returning to Gütersloh Schnaufer and his crew had a rest period until a

Werkstattflug (air-test) was called at 1815 hours for Bf 110 G9+EF. The flight lasted 21 minutes and the Messerschmitt was declared 'serviceable.' Leutnant Fritz Rumpelhardt, Schnaufer's bordfunker, who took part in 100 successful attacks recalls:

'The late night sortie on 21 February was to become Schnaufer's most outstanding achievement in two-and-a-half years' service as a night-fighter pilot. It was always a point of honour with him to be the first in the air after the order to scramble so that he could assess the situation and brief his squadron. Chance played quite an important part in the second operational sortie on 21 February. I was alone in the squadron mess having my supper, having missed the order 'Heightened Preparedness,' so when the order to scramble came the Major was ready but I was not. He did not mince his words about my apparent dilatoriness. In spite of the ensuing mad rush, the rest of the squadron was already airborne, on its way to Düsseldorf. By the time 'EF' lifted off from the aerodrome it was 2008 hours. Events now turned in our favour. Following the instructions, received from Ground Control we believed that the others had reached the engagement area but we were somewhat puzzled when we could see neither bombers, nor night-fighters nor, in fact, any anti-aircraft fire ahead of us. Schnaufer was debating whether to follow our present track when we suddenly noticed over to the North, probably in the Münster area, a lot of light anti-aircraft fire. Again this puzzled us. Guns of that calibre were effective up to 2000 metres only, yet the British bombers usually flew between 3500 and 6000 metres over the Fatherland. Without further thought Schnaufer altered heading to the Northwest to cut off the bombers returning home.

'At 2500 metres we flew through a thin layer of cloud and our radar showed us several targets. Suddenly we were in a condition of 'Shroud,' above us a thin layer of stratus through which the moon shone giving us an opaque screen above which we could see clearly the black silhouettes of the bombers from quite a distance. Schnaufer closed upon a Lancaster flying along unsuspectingly slightly to our starboard at altitude 1700 metres. We had been airborne just over half-an-hour. The Major closed with the target, left to right, from below and delivered the first attack with the two vertically mounted 20mm cannons, just behind him, in the cabin. He aimed between the two engines on the right-hand side. The fuel tanks were located there and this method brings the quickest results. The time was 2044 hours. The right wing of the bomber was badly damaged; a huge flame illuminated the sky. The Lancaster held steady for a while, long enough to allow the crew to escape by parachute before it fell to earth and crashed.

'There followed attack after attack, the sky seemed to be full of bombers! Now the British crews knew we were there and began their violent manoeuvres, twisting and turning in an effort to escape us. Schnaufer had to follow all their corkscrew movements, to remain in a position under the bombers' wings where the return fire could not be brought to bear upon us yet ready to use the 'Schräge Musik'. In one case we practically stood upon our wing tip whilst firing. Things became more difficult for us when we

crossed the front line and the American anti-aircraft batteries opened up. Within a period of nineteen hectic minutes we managed to shoot down seven bombers - without so much as a scratch - testimony to the Major's great skill and ability to get in quickly, line up his target and dive away quickly. Normally during this wild fighting I would hardly have had time to note the details thoroughly but because of the 'shroud effect' the pilot did not need my assistance at the radar to guide him on to each target and I had more time than usual to observe the effects. Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm Gänsler our gunner gave great support as usual but even he could not help when we attacked our eighth Lancaster bomber. At the crucial moment we exhausted the ammunition to the upward-trained guns and as a result had the greatest difficulty in getting away from the concentrated fire from the bomber crew.

'We still had our four horizontally mounted cannons in the nose of our fighter but these too refused to function during our ninth attack and we had to stop chasing the bombers. On the way back to base we had to fly again over the American batteries and by now the major was thoroughly weary, almost spent. I called, therefore, upon Dortmund to give us all possible assistance to clear us back to Gütersloh with all expediency and with this help Schnaufer greased our faithful G9+EF on to the ground. The night's work was done, we were back at base and it was just short of 2200 hours. Once we had taxied in and shut down the engines, we sat in silence for a couple of minutes, thankful to have got through it and thought about the men who had gone down that night and hoped that they had managed to parachute to safety. Many years later I received a letter from an Englishman, Stanley Bridgeman. He had been a crewmember of Lancaster JO-Z on 463 Squadron shot down that night at 2102 hours above Holland. All his crew had managed to escape by parachute. My prayers had been answered in part.'[125]

During the course of the operations on 21/22 February Nachtjäger claimed 55 heavy Viermots (an over-claiming by at least 21 aircraft - 34 Bomber Command Lancaster and Halifaxes were shot down and seven Lancasters crashed in France and Holland) and three Mosquitoes. Two of these were claimed by Oberleutnant Kurt Welter; the other by Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach. Two 2nd TAF Mosquito crews claimed two more victims. East of Störmede airfield Squadron Leader Don A. MacFadyen DFC on 406 'Lynx' Squadron RCAF in NF.XXX NT325 destroyed a Bf 110D of 9./NJG1. Fähnrich Hans Apel and his funker, Unteroffizier Walter Trenck were killed. Both men had survived being shot down by Allied night-fighters near Dorsten on 12/13 December 1944 when Essen was raided by Bomber Command. Flight Lieutenant K. W. 'Chunky' Stewart and Flying Officer Bill Brumby on 488 Squadron RNZAF were patrolling over Holland when they were warned by ground control that they were being followed by a 'strange aircraft' (probably Ju 88G-6 of 2./NJG2 flown by Unteroffizier Rudolf Kursawe). A dogfight ensued in complete darkness between the two night-fighters guided entirely by their radar. With a great deal of weaving around Chunky Stewart managed to get behind the other aircraft. After

brief visual contact it was identified as a Ju 88G night fighter. Following a quick burst of cannon fire it exploded in mid-air near Groenlo.'

Unteroffizier Rudolf Kursawe was killed, Unteroffizier Ernst Licht, bordfunker and Unteroffizier Paul Jähnigen, bordshütze were wounded. South of Duisburg He 219A-0 G9+TH crewed by Hauptmann Schirrmacher and Feldwebel Franz Waldmann was attacked by a Mosquito. Badly damaged and unable to maintain altitude, Schirrmacher made a forced landing in which Waldmann was injured.

On 22 February all 2nd TAF crews and serviceable aircraft were pressed into action for Operation 'Clarion'. This was intended to be the 'coup de grace' for the German transport system with 9,000 Allied aircraft taking part in attacks on enemy railway stations, trains and engines, cross roads, bridges, ships and barges on canals and rivers, stores and other targets. It was to be the last time that the Mosquitoes operated in daylight in such numbers. 2 Group put up every available aircraft, flying 215 sorties, 176 from the Continent and the remainder by 136 Wing in England. 138 and 140 Wings lost nine Mosquitoes and many more were damaged. 2 Group lost a total of 21 Mosquitoes on 'Clarion', with forty damaged. It appears that elements of NJG11 were used in daylight to counter the Mosquito attacks, three crews claiming five Mosquito kills. Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach of the 4th Staffel and Oberleutnant Kurt Welter (flying a Me 262) of the 10th Staffel (better known as Einsatzkommando Welter) each claimed two Mosquitoes shot down. Feldwebel Gustav Richartz of the IInd Gruppe claimed a Mosquito for his first and only victory of the war. The large majority of the Mosquito losses however, were due to (mobile) flak. XIth Luftgau Kommando (covering the greater Hamburg area) reported seventeen Mosquitoes shot down.

The second in a series of terrifying area-bombing raids on German cities, which had thus far escaped the bombing, went ahead on 23/24 February when over 360 Lancasters and thirteen Mosquitoes carried out the first and only area-bombing raid on Pforzheim, a city of 80,000 people. Ten Lancasters failed to return. Five crews of NJG6 claimed thirteen Lancaster kills. Among them, on Stab I/NJG6, with claims for four Abschüsse each were Hauptmann Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich and Oberleutnant Wilhelm Engels. Oberführer Helmut Bunje of 4./NJG6 who had led the attack on Brussels-Evere airfield in a Ju 88G-6 Path Finder on 1 January during Unternehmen 'Bodenplatte', claimed three 'Lankis'. Oberleutnant Peter Spoden of Stab II/NJG6 claimed two 'Lankis' thirty kilometres southwest of Pforzheim just four minutes apart to take his overall score to 22 Abschüsse and he was awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold.

In just over twenty minutes 1,825 tons of bombs were dropped from only 8,000 feet. More than 17,000 people were killed and 83% of the town's built up area was destroyed in 'a hurricane of fire and explosions'. Oberleutnant Wilhelm 'Wim' Johnen, Staffelkapitän, 5/NJG1 was one who vented his anger on the RAF:[126]

'With the attacks on Pforzheim and Dresden, the Allies mad-dog rage for destruction reached its peak. Just as in antiquity the city of Pompeii was

destroyed by the sudden eruption of Vesuvius... the Allies annihilated the cities which had so far been spared, with a burning rain of incendiaries. In particular the cities of Pforzheim, Dresden and Würzburg. Pforzheim was the first of these Pompeii's. The city was laid in ruins and ashes and about 17,600 people met their deaths in a hurricane of fire and explosions. During the attack the fire fighters were powerless but even after the raid the fires could not be put out since the water mains had been damaged and the walls of the houses had collapsed and filled the streets. The ashes lay ten feet high in the streets. This storm of fire reached its peak after ten minutes. It was so powerful that the rain of ashes was carried as far as Stuttgart and the sky turned blood red over a radius of fifty miles. On account of the raging flames and the explosion of delayed-action bombs after the attack, the inhabitants dared not leave their cellars and were suffocated. Any who dared to come out collapsed in the white heat of the huge fires. Thousands of blackened and mutilated corpses lay among the ruins.'

Endnotes Chapter 10

119 That same night Bf 110G-4 730370 2Z+EL of 3./NJG6 piloted by Oberleutnant Willy Rathmann, with no victories, was shot down near Reutlingen. Rathmann, Feldwebel Erich Berndt, bordfunker and Obergefreiter Alfred Obry, bordschütze were killed.

120 In addition the US 8th Air Force despatched 450 B-17s of which 316 attacked Dresden shortly after 12 noon on 14 February. Another force of 368 RAF aircraft of 4, 6 and 8 Groups went to Böhlen but the weather was bad and the bombing scattered. 1 Halifax FTR.

121 *Nachtjaeger gegen Bomberpulks: Ein Tatsachen-bericht ueber die Deutsche Nachjagd im Zweiten Weltkrieg,* Pabel Rastatt, 1960/Duell unter den Sternen (Duel Under the Stars) 1956/Kimber Pocket Edition 1958.

122 Reuter died on 3 October 1997.

123 All fourteen crew members, on Lancaster I NF907 piloted by Flying Officer Kenneth George Holloway RAAF and Lancaster I PA216 flown by Flying Officer Harold Leslie Lucas, were lost without trace.

124 The three other Halifaxes that were lost were MZ447 Z5-A flown by Flight Lieutenant Allan John Rate RAAF (killed with six other crew, one PoW): MZ461 Z5-G flown by Flying Officer Vivian Clive Ely RAAF (killed with all six other crew); PN429 Z5-E flown by Flight Lieutenant John Stuart Tootal RAFVR (killed with all seven other crew).

125 Lancaster I NG329 JO-Z on 463 Squadron was MIA at Gravenhorst.

126 *Nachtjaeger gegen Bomberpulks: Ein Tatsachen-bericht ueber die DeutscheNachjagdimZweiten Weltkrieg,* PabelRastatt, 1960/Duellunterden Sternen (Duel Under the Stars). 1956/Kimber Pocket Edition 1958).

Chapter 11

Unternehmen 'Gisela'

The Englishmen had got wind of the affair and tricked us by transmitting the popular song 'I Dance With Gisela Tonight' on the Allied propaganda station 'Soldatensender Calais' (Soldiers' Radio Calais).'

Not since Unternehmen [Operation] 'Steinbock' in early 1944 had Britons suffered from German intruder operations. Nachtjagd's final large-scale offensive effort was Unternehmen 'Gisela', an intruder operation which had been mooted almost a year and a half earlier when H_2S plots enabled German night fighters to accurately follow British bomber streams. In December 1943 General 'Beppo' Schmid, C-in-C of Nachtjagd, intended to employ intruders not in routine operations against night raids but from time to time with all available forces (600-700 aircraft) when the bomber stream was on its way home and while landing. He expected to take Bomber Command by surprise as RAF crews were accustomed to landing without precautions on fully lit bases. By destroying at least 200 bombers in one operation, Schmid hoped to bring the Bomber Offensive to a temporary halt. Finally, in October 1944 General Schmid received approval and on 21 February 1945 the green light was given for the attack, but by then the Reich was already staring certain defeat in the face.[127]

Twenty-seven year old Leutnant Arnold Döring in 10./NJG3 recalled: 'Unnternehmen 'Gisela' was to be a long-range night fighting and bombing effort over England. With a British night bombing raid in progress, our night fighters and bombers should cross the North Sea at very low level and intrude on the British over their aerodromes whilst they were landing. The whole thing had been planned to render the south of England unsafe first, then central England and finally the north. Thus, our comrades who operate over south and central England would drive the diverting Tommies into our arms. Our reconnaissance aircraft had discovered that the Tommy flew around his 'dromes in almost peacetime fashion and with all lights on, both in the air and on the ground. Moreover, from the statements of prisoners of war, one had an exact picture of the take-off and landing procedures. We received a thorough instruction on the airfield lighting systems, the Drem airfield circuiting and the T-system, as well as information on dummy airfields, the routes that the bombers used over England, flak and balloon-defended areas and our own routes to fly in and out. Our Geschwader Kommodore, Oberst Radusch, went into the operation in depth and after some time the Division Commander, General Major Ibel tested our knowledge. This all proceeded under the strictest secrecy. In spite of all this, something must have leaked out, as a little later a married couple of agents were taken into custody due to the vigilance of

one of our pilots. Their aim was to spy on Unnternehmen 'Gisela', which was continuously shoved forward. The Englishmen had got wind of the affair and tricked us by transmitting the popular song *I Dance With Gisela Tonight'* on the Allied propaganda station 'Soldatensender Calais' (Soldiers' Radio Calais).'

Oberst Generalmajor Dietrich Peltz committed only 142 Ju 88Gs of NJG2, 3, 4 and 5 to 'Gisela', which finally went ahead on 3/4 March; the 2,000th night of the war. Some 234 RAF bombers raided the Fischer-Tropsch synthetic oil plant at Kamen (the fourth raid on this target in eight days) and 222 aircraft attacked an aqueduct on the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen. 100 Group meanwhile, dispatched 61 aircraft on RCM sorties to jam the German radar and radio-networks and thus hamper the flak and night-fighter defences. One of the 100 Group aircraft was a Halifax on 192 Squadron piloted by the CO, 30-year old Wing Commander David William Donaldson DSO DFC. His tail gunner was Jack Short the Gunnery Leader:

'We went out in daylight, surrounded by Lancasters of 5 Group - the 'Death or Glory Boys', who were to punch a hole in the canal. Our lone Halifax caused a great deal of interest. They must have wondered if we had the right raid! It was a comfortable feeling though being with all these aircraft in daylight. At the target there was altostratus at 15,000 feet; bloody annoying because the searchlights silhouetted us against the cloud and we were picked up by the ack-ack. I saw three Lancs go down, one fairly close, in flames. [From these two raids, seven Lancasters were lost]. We were keyed up. Donaldson tipped the Halifax on one wing to look underneath for fighters. If suddenly your right wing crumples ... but we encountered no opposition and we headed back to Foulsham at 10,000 feet.'

At Oulton nearby Fortress III HB815/J on 214 Squadron was captained by 24-four year old Flight Sergeant Harry 'Benny' Bennett DFC. He had received his DFC for his actions on 7 February when the crew went on special duty operations jamming radio and radar during the 6 Group bombing of the Dortmund Ems Canal. Bennett's crew had been jamming for twenty minutes and then gained height slowly. The bombers were busy bombing the canal and dodging a horde of German night fighters. There was also heavy flak. When it was home time, Bennett's navigator, 23-year old Ernest George 'Paddy' Paddick set course but they got left behind as the other aircraft were faster. In the vicinity of Essen they were coned by a multitude of searchlights. Essen was heavily defended with 400 heavy flak guns. Paddick was hit by a shell that penetrated his hip joint, went through his lower belly and out the other hip joint and lay on the seat beside him without exploding. The 20-year old mid-upper gunner, Leslie 'Les' Arnold Hadder tried to render first aid but 'Paddy' fought back. Frank Hares, the 21-year old bomb aimer was unable to help because he could not cross the great gap in the floor. They resumed course but there then appeared to be a fire under the starboard wing. New Zealand Flight Sergeant, Francis 'Frank' Phillip Hudson the 26-year old mid-upper gunner thought they would have to bail out over the Ruhr but on throttling back, the glow under the wing disappeared and it was decided that the turbo supercharger had

been shot off one of the engines. Frank Hares navigated Bennett to Manston with the little remaining navigating equipment and he later received a DFM for his efforts. It was a pretty ropey landing. The Fortress did a few loops as they only had one wheel. 'Paddy' Paddick died the following day.

Twenty-year old Flight Sergeant Leslie Arnold Hadder replaced Frank Hudson as mid-upper gunner on the night of 3/4 March. Frank was finding it very difficult to cough at height due to the cold and difference in air pressure, so he went off sick for a while. 'Paddy' Paddick was replaced by 24-year old Flight Sergeant Harry 'Barney' Barnfield, the navigator of a brand new crew which had just arrived on the Squadron and who, as yet, had not flown on operations. Alastair McDermid took 'Jock' Murdoch's place as waist gunner, Warrant Officer Lindsay Joseph Odgers, a 21-year old Australian substituted for the Canadian special operator, Flying Officer Steve Nessner, who was also in sick quarters. Twenty year old Leslie Ernest Billington was flight engineer. Warrant Officer R. W. 'Bill' Church was the other waist gunner. Twenty-four year old Sergeant Patrick James Healy and Flight Sergeant William Briddon the 27-year old WOp/AG were the two other members of the crew.

Leutnant Arnold Döring of 10./NJG3 took off from Jever and joined the returning stream of RAF bombers over the North Sea. In an effort to foil the enemy radar defences Döring flew at a height of less than fifty metres (160 feet). recalled: 'We are ordered to keep absolute radio silence, the Tommy should not notice anything. Neither are we allowed to engage any Viermots in combat over the North Sea, as we must succeed in totally surprising them. Shortly before we arrive over the coast, we climb to a height of 1,800 metres [5,800 feet] and throw out bundles of Düppel to counter the AI of the Mosquitoes. Walter Hoyer my Funker makes notes of a series of Abschüsse, so that we can confirm the times of claims on our return. We identify a row of airfields on which bombs are dropped and see a lot of aircraft being shot out of the sky. Lines of tracer hiss down into targets on the ground, as we are ordered not to bring back home a single bullet from our frontal guns.

'There is a bomber pilot carelessly flying with his navigation lights on. It is a stupid and tremendously pig-headed thing to do, as only a bomber pilot could. [The individual aircraft switched on their navigation lights some time before they crossed the Norfolk coast]. I position myself beneath this Viermot, a B-17, as I can see from its wide tailplane. This machine is now not far from becoming a burning heap on the ground.'

Döring's quarry was the Fortress III skippered by Harry Bennett, who was about to land when he was told to go around again. His 'A' Flight Commander, Squadron Leader Bob Davies, was approaching on three engines and recalled: 'As I approached Oulton I heard control give Bennett clearance to join the circuit. I called saying I was on three engines and was told to come straight in. A few moments later Bennett, who I think was on longish finals, was told to go round again as I was turning long finals and was cleared to land on runway 45. I saw Bennett climbing away and above me, to my right. Then I saw a fairly long burst of cannon fire and his No.2

engine and wing caught fire. I lost sight of him still climbing and turning right. At this time I heard the tower say 'Bandits! Bandits': Switch off all lights'.'

'I have caught him during his approach to the Drem landing system' continues Döring 'and as the Tommy sinks lower, I quickly close in to attack with my 'Schräge Musik' cannon. The airfield is very active and many aircraft are flying around with their lights on. I sit about fifty metres beneath the Tommy and I aim a long burst from my oblique cannons into the fuselage, cockpit, two motors and the fuel tanks in the right wing. The bomber starts to burn. The fires in its fuselage flicker up and then become fainter. The crew probably switches on the fire extinguishers. The Viermot crashes hard in a pile of dust and smoke but without a fire. We clearly see it in the bright moonlight as we fly low and away over the wreckage.128 Then all the lights go out. Walter Hoyer, my bordfunker notes the time as 01.05 hours. My bordmechaniker, Paul Unger, sees a target with its lights still on and I make a head-on attack. The bomber comes towards me quickly and then a hundred things happen at once before I can fire. This is stupid of me. I pull up and by a hair's breadth the Tommy passes below. For an instant I have been a little out in my reckoning. The Tommy disappears into the darkness.'

Sergeant Don Prutton a Liberator flight engineer on 223 Squadron at Oulton recalled: 'The intruder, which we learned later was a Ju 88, did a sharp turn and sent a few rounds in the direction of Flying Control [a cannon shell penetrated a safe near a wall behind which Dick Gunton, 214 Squadron Engineering Officer, was sheltering] before all the lights on the airfield were switched off. Wing Commander Desmond John McGlinn the Commanding Officer, who was in the tower, had left his Humber staff car outside with the spotlight on; a zealous airman immediately kicked it in but his prompt action was not greatly appreciated by the 'old man'. The 'zealous airman' was Dick Gunton who, unable to find the off switch, had resorted to swift action. Gunton related the events next morning at the Cushing household at the Old Hall, Thursford. Eight-year-old Tom Cushing listened avidly to the family friend who at Christmas had taken him in his pride and joy, a red MG sports coupe, to see *Holiday Inn* at a Norwich cinema. Gunton, who hurt his foot kicking in the glass because 'it was tougher than expected' confided that he did it because the beam was shining on his beloved MG and he did not want it shot to bits by the Ju 88!

Bob Davies concludes: 'All airfield lights were extinguished. I had landed by now and was stationary. I switched off my navigation lights, or so I thought. However my rear gunner said, 'There is still a white light shining somewhere above me!' I told him it was impossible as my flight engineer, Flying Officer 'Jock' Fitzsimmonds and I had checked all switches and they were definitely 'off'. While we started madly to check again all the switches the two of us began to feel very naked and also very panicky as we were expecting to be blown apart at any moment. I finally found the small switch which controlled the white formation light situated at the very top of the vertical stabilizer and switched it off. All ten of us only dared to

breathe again when we finally found our blacked-out dispersal. The night and the fright were not yet over. As my Hillman pick-up was parked at dispersal, I drove with my flight engineer to the still fiercely burning wreck which must have roughly impacted in a flying position. The fuselage (or what was left of it) had broken off aft of the radio room and also aft of the beam gun position. I could not believe any of the crew had survived but both waist gunners, Alastair McDermid and 'Bill' Church, had 'walked' from the blazing inferno. They had been taken to sick quarters where I spoke briefly to them.'[129]

The dead, dying and wounded were brought into sick quarters where two doctors worked on them. Frank Hudson had to show them how to take off the gunners' harnesses. The lights, although blacked out, were enough for the Junkers to shoot up the Intelligence Section and the car. When a WAAF opened the door of the sick quarters to see what was going on outside, a burst of bullets and shells entered at the door, miraculously missing her, gouging the lino covering the concrete floor and wrecking the fire pot. Burning coke was scattered everywhere. Frank Hudson departed for the woods and hid behind the biggest tree he could find, despite bare feet and a hellish cough.

Harry Bennett's girlfriend was a nurse at the sick quarters and they were getting engaged but she was not on duty that night. During the next few days she enquired where Bennett was. No one was game enough to tell her but she looked in the morgue and saw his body amongst the large number in there. She went quite hysterical and screamed and screamed. She did not settle down for a long time and eventually disappeared from camp, probably on indefinite leave. Leslie Hadder was the first to be buried. The doctor would not let Frank Hudson attend his funeral because of the state of his health. A couple of days later the rest of the bodies were taken to the Commonwealth cemetery at Cambridge, where, in station chapel, the names of eleven airmen were read out including Frank Hudson's. He counted the coffins and there were only eleven. All the WAAFs were crying. Frank Hudson did not know they missed him so much!

Don Prutton concludes: 'Aircraft still airborne were diverted to another airfield, but were followed by the Junkers 88. He inflicted some more damage before being chased off by our fighters. We heard later that he was shot down somewhere in the north of England.' This was wishful thinking. After his attack on Bennett's Fortress, Döring found another victim. He wrote: 'I descend steeply to 600 metres [1,900 feet] and as I approach two illuminated airfields they both switch off. Three others are still in operation, on the ground red lamps flash the night intruder-warning signal 'R for Raider'. Yet many Viermots are still flying around with all navigation lights on. Despite the fact that we fly very low, the navigation lights of a bomber even flash past beneath me. As I am not familiar with the surroundings and the moon disappears behind a bank of clouds, I let this Viermot escape and attack another one on its final approach. This drome flashes its identification 'DH' [the Morse code letters for Dishforth] in white capital letters, the landing system is a Drem system and over the airfield it is a

frantic affair. I fire my 'Schräge Musik' into its left wing, between the engines where the main fuel tanks are. After about fifteen rounds the aircraft catches fire, flies on for one or two minutes and then slides on to its right wing. At about 0115 hours there is a big explosion and the wreckage burns on the ground below me. I cannot see any parachutes in the light of the half moon.[130]

'I am still over the airfield flashing 'DH' and have eighty kilometres to go to reach the coast. We are not expected to return home with any ammunition left in our nose guns and we are free to attack any targets on the ground or in the air. The Tommies do this in the day, shooting at vehicles, trains and men in fields, villages and towns. Now we will fight back and repay like for like. I eliminate a double Morse identification beacon and attack some trucks on a mountainous road. A light briefly illuminates a train travelling north; a long burst of my fire sets fire to a wagon and the train lets out a lot of steam as I shoot it full of holes. I fire the last of my ammunition into the streets of the harbour town of Scarborough. A convoy is assembling on the sea just off the town. I can only just clear the masts of the anchored vessels and then set off for home, flying as low as possible. A searchlight illuminates a barrage balloon which we are able to fly over, thanks to the Lord and we go down to only a few metres above the sea and head for home. We still have a sea-crossing of 600 kilometres [370 miles] ahead of us.

'The Tommy takes revenge in another way, as he jams our radio beacons and switches on other beacons with the same identification as ours, but situated on British territory. Still, as I can recall this trick from my bombing sorties back in 1940, they don't fool me and I keep on course, heading east. After one and three-quarter hours we enter a zone of bad weather, with low cloud, which our 'weather frog' had not predicted. Soon, we overfly the Dutch coast. On dead reckoning, we reckon to be in the area of Jever but my Funker can't get through to the homing station, as twenty-five machines are still waiting before us and some of them are in an emergency. There must be a desperate muddle over and on all aerodromes in the area of the German Bight due to the increasingly worsening weather conditions. As I only have fuel left for fifteen more minutes, I send out an emergency call. I get a bearing which however is very weak and moreover is far behind me, so I decide to touch down on an airfield I can see in front of me. It turns out to be Nordholz. We have an operational sortie of over five hours behind us.

'I get a phone connection with Jever and report our successes. Oberleutnant Josef Förster has also bagged two '4-mots', Feldwebel Heinz Misch has one Abschuss [a '4-mot' for his tenth victory] and the other crews have either seen nothing, didn't get in a shooting position or haven't returned yet. Division wants to know everything, I have to give them an exact picture of my sortie, on the weather on both the way in and out, on my crossing of the coast, times, enemy defences, Abschüsse, etc. etc. etc. I finally drop down on a bed. I am exhausted but due to the too strong strain of the nerves I can't fall asleep. And the telephone kept ringing, first my

Gruppe, then the Geschwader, again the Division and even the Jagdkorps, they all want to know details of the operation. These inquisitive chairborne Staff stallions should have flown on the mission themselves; then they would know how things looked over there. Probably the weather frogs had a lot to explain, as they had completely mispredicted the weather and we had encountered the opposite of what they had told us, as sad to say so often had happened before. Our own losses among the returning crews must be enormous, as can be deducted from the many emergency calls over the radio and as later phone calls confirmed.

'Next day, I receive a whole 500 litres of juice, fly back to Jever and on landing we have to shake lots of hands. Everybody is of the opinion that I now should get the Ritterkreuz. The Gruppe had suffered severe losses: Major Berthold 'Petz' ['Sneak'] Ney, Kommandeur, Stab IV./NJG3, was forced to bail out on the way back as he couldn't find an airfield to land [Ju 88G-6 D5+AE] in the atrocious weather and he was badly injured in the process. The result was a paralysis from the waist down. [Ney remained bed-ridden for the next 55 years, finally passing away in February 1996]. His crew was safe. The Staffelkapitän of the 12th is missing. Unteroffizier Walter Lohse and his crew are missing and are presumed to have crashed in the North Sea. Unteroffizier Leo Kowalski and crew crashed [at Dickhausen near Wilhelmshaven] shortly after taking off from Marx airfield due to an engine fire. The pilot and his Funker Wiebranitz are dead; his bordshütze could bail out and thus saved his skin. Furthermore, many other aircraft are damaged in emergency landings, as these machines were landed in desperation with their last drops of fuel.'

Leutnant Günther Wolf of 9/NJG5 returned later with a claim for a Lancaster near the Humber Estuary at 0108 hours. 'As I flew back across the North Sea the tension began to lift - it was over. The events, the combat, the tracers, the searchlights and balloons, die whole episode seemed to have lasted just a minute. Then we flew into the thick syrup like cloud, where on the 1:100,000 map would it end? For an hour we flew on and eventually decided that we had drifted to the north of our intended track. From the Humber Estuary we had set an exact course, but what had the wind done? When our calculations indicated that we must be near the coast, the bordfunker tried to get a QDM from Wittmundhafen but all his attempts failed, anything he got was unintelligible. Now we began to doubt our navigation, was that Borkum below us? Could we possibly have flown that far?

'As if in a dream a bright light shone below us, now we would know where we were. The crew began to search the documents to look up this beacon; they searched long, very long and hard and eventually, with doubt in their voices said: 'That is Leeuwarden'. If that was so then we were a good 120 km from our estimated position. We called Leeuwarden and confirmed our position, a glance at the fuel gauges showed that we could still reach Wittmundhafen and I set course east-north-east. The weather meanwhile had become even worse. The cloud base was 300 metres and it was raining, but I could just see to land and touched down at 0256 hours.

I made my report on the operation and learned that many crews had still not returned. Perhaps they had landed at other bases? One crew had flown over the coast and crashed into the ground, another crew reported that they had bailed out after running out of fuel west of Berlin! What had happened? The wind had changed direction sharply and was three times as strong as forecast. No wonder we crossed the coast in Holland and not East Friesland. The rain and cloud did the rest.'[131]

Hauptmann Heinz-Horst Hissbach of II./NJG2 claimed two Viermots for his 29th and 30th Abschüsse. Hissbach was killed on 14 April during a low level attack at night on American vehicles near Geinhausen when he was hit by ack-ack fire. He had 34 Night-Abschüsse in over 200 sorties. Feldwebel Heinz Koppe of III./NJG2 claimed a Lancaster - possibly PB476 on 12 Squadron - for his eighth victory. Oberfeldwebel Heinz Misch of IV/NJG3 claimed a Viermot for his tenth and final Abschüsse. Northeast of Cambridge, Hauptmann Kurt Fladrich of 9./NJG4 claimed a Lancaster (or Halifax) for his fifteenth victory and Oberleutnant Franz Brinkhaus of 6./NJG2 a 'Hudson' which was more likely a 169 Squadron Mosquito, for his thirteenth and final Abschüsse. Hauptmann Gerhard Raht of Stab NJG2 claimed two Viermots for his 54th and 55th victories.

Oberleutnant Walter Briegleb, Staffelkapitän 7./NJG2 was the first of his Gruppe to return and he submitted a claim for a Lancaster south of Waddington at 0036 hours and one for another Lancaster west of Lincoln twenty minutes later for his final victories of the war. 'When at last we crossed the Dutch coast we could relax a little. We recognised the landmarks around us but the weather had unexpectedly deteriorated. We had to pull ourselves together and concentrate and I had to stay alert. After four hours in the air we found our good old home of Marx again and landed safely, to be greeted by the Schwarzemänner [ground crews or 'black men', so-called because of the colour of their tunics] who had been waiting for us to return.' On 1 May 1945 Briegleb and his bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel Möller flew their Ju 88G-6 to Portugal.

Feldwebel Günther Schmidt of 12/NJG3 flying a Ju 88G-6 returned to file a claim for a Viermot at 0211 hours over an airfield ten kilometres south of Darlington for his fifth victory. He reported that 'At 02.00 hours the bordfunker, when spotting some Very pistol shooting, saw an aircraft overhead, which shortly after was identified by the entire crew as a four-engined one with a twin tail fin. My altitude was 200 metres, that of the enemy aircraft about 800-1,000 metres. I managed to approach from below and let the first burst go from about 150-50 metres at 0205 hours, the enemy aircraft proceeding against the landing direction within the traffic pattern (Drem circuit) altitude 500 metres. Hits were observed in the port wing and some debris was also lost. The aircraft turned to the left. The second attack was started some distance from astern. Hits in the rear turret and fuselage. Small fire in the fuselage with dark red flames. Third attack from the rear; also from a distance of about 150-50 metres. Again hits in the port wing and fuselage. Almost immediately it crashed and exploded north of the airfield, within the traffic circuit. I was in a position to watch the enemy

aircraft until it crashed. There was no defence. The airfield where the combat occurred was located roughly ten kilometres south of the city of Darlington and had, along the west side of its Drem system, the identification letters 'CR' formed by white lamps.'

Their victim was the all-French crew of Captaine P. Notelle, flying Halifax NR229/D on 346 'Groupe Guyenne' Squadron, had completed a normal trip to Kamen, their 27th sortie and had returned to their base of Elvington. By this time, two Halifaxes had already been brought down near the airfield and all aircraft were being sent to diversion airfields or, if low on fuel, to Croft. Notelle set course for Long Marston but shortly after received another signal which read: 'Proceed to diversion airfield, A/C 49 land at 327', which as Sergeant Santoni, the wireless operator, knew referred to Croft but no one knew what 'A/C 49' meant. (Only later was it found that 'A/C 49' was an error and should have read 'aircraft low on fuel'). Notelle changed course for Croft. As the Halifax was flying at about 2,500 feet in the circuit at Croft Schmidt made his attack and set a wing on fire. Sergeant J. Malia, the rear gunner, attempted to return his fire but the Halifax was already crippled and at only 900 feet, Notelle decided to attempt a forced landing. As the crew went to their crash positions, Schmidt made another attack. Fortunately, the ground below as visible in the moonlight, but the aircraft sliced through a copse of small saplings before crashing at the end of the field in a pine wood at Rockcliffe Farm, Hurworth, three miles SSE of Darlington in Durham at 0214 at 90 mph. The starboard wing, whose engines were on fire, came off and this saved the crew. Notelle was not attached to his seat at the moment the fighter brought him down and his forehead was split open. Sergeant Malia was seriously wounded in the crash. Lieutenants E. Boussy and B. Flous were also slightly injured. The aircraft caught fire as the crew scrambled out, carrying their unconscious pilot with them and watched the fire consume the Halifax.

At Elvington, Jules Roy, a Halifax bomb aimer and aircraft captain[132] on 346 Squadron, had gone to bed earlier than usual but could not sleep. 'The night was disturbed from time to time by the drone of a plane. After midnight I heard the usual roar of their circuits round the flare path and then other noises mingled with them and the intervals grew longer. At last the Tannoy sounded an alert. 'Attention, attention! Threatened raid of intruders! Check your blackouts!' This sometimes happens. I tried to pay no attention and buried my right ear in the bolster. As I am a little deaf in the left ear I can usually cut out all outside noises. However, I continued to hear everything amazingly clearly. The first volley burst, followed by a silence. I opened my eyes and saw through the window the red glow and the tall flames of an explosion and then two or three minutes later another burst of cannon followed by the same silence. I jumped out of bed, flung a sweater round my shoulders and went out. A burning plane was spiralling slowly in the sky above Elvington and then it went into a vertical dive and exploded like a star with a terrifying beauty. An incredible spray of brands and sparks and an enormous trail of smoke. The moon had been up an hour and was 30 degrees above the horizon. The sky then emptied, with a long

series of far-off explosions and the wail of sirens. Two or three German fighters were wandering in the region in search of stragglers. One of them crossed the airfield and I heard an explosion and saw a red glare to the north.

'I went into 'G's room and woke him up. He had heard nothing.

'You'll pretend afterwards that you're a light sleeper,' I said as I shook him. 'The Jerry fighters are here bringing down our fellows.'

The ground staff of hut No. 23 were also up and appreciating the show in their own way.

'I thought the last one was for us.'

They meant that they were afraid the plane would fall on them.

Went back to my hut at last and silence returned. The loudspeakers: 'Attention, attention. Risk of a ground strafe. All personnel to the shelter!'

'A German fighter returned. It was difficult to see in the night, but I managed to follow the fleeing silhouette of a twin-engined plane circling above the airfield, making off and turning brutally to dive on us with his cannons throwing up a cloud of stars on the ground. A minute later a bomber with all its lights extinguished flew over the field with the throttle back, trying to land without a light. He did not make it and overshot. Another marauder. The night was clear. Eight-tenths of cloud, not very thick, at about 3,000 to 4,000 feet.

'The far-off noise of our anti-aircraft fire or something else. Other nervous bombers flew over, with their engines throttled down. I wondered: 'What are they up to? What orders have they got? Where will they manage to land?' Felt a great pity for them. How comes it that I am not in this? Tried to fall asleep.' Three of the thirteen Halifaxes that were lost were blasted from the night sky by their unseen assailants and never reached the safety of Elvington. The crew on Halifax III NA680 L8-H flown by Capitaine Pierre Jean Gaston Laucou were on their first operation. They had successfully reached Kamen but the fuselage bomb doors had failed to open and it was not until twenty minutes' later that they discovered that the entire fuselage load was still intact. The fault, it seemed, had had been caused by flak damage on the bomb run. The Halifax was now over France and the air bomber, 2nd Lieutenant Giroud, ordered a return to the bomb jettisoning area in The Wash, where, in an operation which lasted twenty minutes, the load was released by hand. The 'Bandit' warning had been received and as fuel was running low, Laucou made for the diversion airfield at Long Marston. All the crew were at their action stations but they were surprised by an attack from below which damaged the Halifax's nose slightly. Lancou put the bomber into a corkscrew and executed other evasive actions for two or three minutes, by the end of which they had succeeded in losing their attacker. A few minutes later they were attacked again and the Halifax was hit badly. The starboard inner engine caught fire and the engine covers in the rear fuselage were set ablaze. Sergeant Pierre Le Masson, engineer, was wounded and unable to help himself. Without hesitation, Laucou remained at the controls after the rest of the crew bailed out. He made a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to put down at

Cranfield in Lincolnshire and at about 0105 hours both men died in the crash near Sleaford.[133]

Halifax III NR179 'C-Charlie' on 466 Squadron flown by Flying Officer Allan Percy William Shelton RAAF, born 18 April 1923 overshot its landing at Driffield and low on fuel aborted an attempt to land at Pocklington before diving into the ground near Elvington at 0110 hours. Three of the crew bailed out safely before the crash which killed Flying Officer Shelton RAAF and three others.[134]

Halifax III NR235 L8-O on 347 Squadron piloted by Lieutenant Jean Marie Bernard Louis Terrien neared Elvington as Shelton's aircraft was shot down and the crew saw it go down in flames. Lieutenant R. Mosnier, the navigator on Terrien's crew, alone, had counted thirteen bombers shot down over England. This crew, who were on their 28th operation, had already evaded one fighter attack on the way home when they received two bursts and everyone was maintaining a particularly good look. Despite their alertness and the clear moonlight night, no one saw the Intruder which set fire to their starboard wing over the airfield. Both engines soon became engulfed in flames and Terrien held the Halifax level and four of the crew had already made good their escapes by the time Adjutant G. Puthier the flight engineer secured one of the hooks of the pilot's parachute to Terrien and left the aircraft. Sergeant A. Dunand the rear gunner was the last to leave the Halifax which was now in a steep dive. Only the pilot was still in the aircraft when it crashed at about 0115 hours at Glebe Farm at Sutton upon Derwent, seven miles SSE of York. Terrien's body was found in the charred remains. Bomb aimer and skipper, Second Lieutenant R. Michelon and the other five survivors stated in their reports that they were convinced that the pilot's actions in holding the Halifax level for so long saved their lives.[135]

Jules Roy later visited the scene of Terrien's crash. 'The shapeless mass of his Halifax was still smoking. It fell at the outskirts of a village near a farmhouse, on a slight hummock at the edge of the Derwent. From there one can see the flooded meadows, the lock where we went fishing and the two towers of the Elvington churches. The countryside was receding gently into the twilight. The bells were tolling in the distance. The villagers had come to see the remains of the plane. How glad I am that I was friendly with Terrien at the time when he was going through a crisis. I seem always to recognise on the faces of those who are going to die the signs of their sentence, as though a kind of melancholy had cast a shadow over them.'

At Elvington Trouette's crew, short of fuel, called for assistance. An airfield was lit up for him, where he landed. As he taxied he was raked by a fighter's machine-guns. He hurried to reach the grass, with a 250lb bomb rolling about in the bay.[136]

Altogether, 33 Ju 88G night intruders were lost during 'Gisela'. Five German aircraft crashed on British soil and eight other crews were reported missing. Three more crews perished in crashes on German territory. Six crews bailed out due to lack of fuel and eleven crashed on landing. The Ju 88G-6 piloted by Hauptmann Hans Krause in I./NJG4 was officially

classified as 30% damaged after the crash-landing near Twente airfield. I./NJG4 lost another four Ju 88G-6s on 'Gisela', mainly due to aircraft running out of fuel on their return trip.

In all the intruders shot down 24 aircraft - thirteen Halifaxes, nine Lancasters and a Mosquito NF.XIX. Ju 88G-6 of 12./NJG3, which crashed at Elvington near Pocklington aerodrome, Yorkshire at 0151 hours after hitting trees at low level was the last German aircraft to be brought down on British soil. Richard, Ellen and Violet Moll died, as did Ritterkreuzträger Hauptmann Johann Dreher, Staffelkapitän, 12./NJG3, his two bordfunkers, Feldwebel Gustav Schmitz and Oberfeldwebel Hugo Böker and Feldwebel Martin Bechter.[137] Feldwebel Rudolf 'Rudi' Morenz of II./NJG2 who claimed three Abschüsse was forced to return when one engine on his Ju 88C-2 failed because of falling oil pressure and his bordfunker Obergefreiter Anton Roy was killed in the crash-landing of their at Gilze-Rijin.

Jack Short would always remember the WAAF girl's voice in the Foulsham tower. 'You're clear to circle and orbit at 6,000 feet she said. Donaldson was the last back and we were the top of the stack. There were four-five more Halifaxes underneath at 500 feet intervals. We could see Foulsham airfield illuminated below. Donaldson started a left orbit. I suddenly saw a two-second set of tracer well beneath the aircraft, then more, in one direction. Then a ball of fire. This poor girl on the R/T screamed, Bandits! Bandits! The airfield lights were doused. She yelled out Weston Zoyland, the diversion airfield, in plain language. Then there was total silence.'

The aircraft Jack Short had seen was Halifax Mk III LV955 'C on 192 Squadron piloted by Flying Officer E. D. 'Robbie' Roberts. Roberts had taken off from RAF Foulsham at 2000 hours for a lone ELINT operation over the North Sea to search for possible navigational aids which it was thought might be associated with air-launched V1s and their guidance to targets in the UK. The Halifax carried out its assigned task and returned to Norfolk. At about 0100 hours, the two main forces were also overflying the area. 'G-George' arrived back over Foulsham. Robbie Roberts recalls:

'When we arrived, the airfield lighting was on and after calling the tower for permission to land I began to lose height down into the circuit when given the OK to 'pancake'. My navigation lights were on and wheels lowered. The next thing, a cry over the radio from the control tower said, 'Bandits overhead!' and the lighting went out on the ground. I hit the switch to turn off the navigation lights and turned away from the circuit.

Roberts was instructed to turn to starboard. Whilst flying at an altitude of 1,200 feet, a Ju 88 night-fighter attacked. He continues: The attack appeared to come from below us. It looked like that from the tracer. The aircraft was hit and both inner engines were put out of action and the aircraft caught fire. Sergeant Ken Sutcliffe, the mid-upper gunner, reported streams of flame as the petrol leaking from the wing tanks ignited. I thought that there would be a chance for some to escape by parachute and gave the order for an emergency parachute escape, provided I could keep

the aircraft under some sort of control. [Only Flying Officer R. C. Todd, the special wireless operator, was able to bail out successfully, injured.] At 1,000 feet I ordered all the crew back to the normal crash positions and told them to sit tight as it was too low by then to attempt any further parachute escapes. We suffered a further attack and this resulted in the extremely messy death of the wireless operator, Warrant Officer William Clementson, who was in his crash position in the cockpit and also the disintegration of the instrument panel. 1 grappled with the controls and tried to maintain some sort of stability, looking for a field in which I could make a crash-landing. I can remember passing over some trees in the boundary of the field and pulling everything back in my lap in an endeavour to make a belly-landing, which apparently did come off.

'G-George' crash-landed in flames at Ainlies Farm, Fulmodeston, near the Mosquito fighter base at Little Snoring, setting a haystack and two huts on fire. Only two men survived, dragged clear by local people; Roberts suffered a crush-fractured spine and burns and did not regain consciousness until two weeks later. After treatment at RAF Hospital Ely and East Grinstead, where he underwent plastic surgery under the famous Sir Archibald McIndoe and thus became a member of the famous Guinea Pig Club, was discharged from the RAF in 1947. The mid-upper gunner, Sergeant Ken Sutcliffe, survived with burns to his body and face. The navigator, Flying Officer William Darlington, the flight engineer, Sergeant John Anderson and the air bomber, Flight Sergeant Reginald Holmes, were found dead in the burnt-out wreckage. The aircraft was almost completely destroyed. The rear gunner, 34-year-old Sergeant Richard Grapes, was found dead with his parachute unopened, killed either by lack of altitude or enemy fire as he jumped. Jack Short accompanied his coffin to Liverpool.

Mosquito XIX MM610/H on 169 Squadron flown by Canadian Squadron Leader Victor Jack Fenwick and Flying Officer John Walton Pierce, who were returning from a bomber support sortie to Kamen, was shot down and crashed at The Avenue, Buxton in Norfolk. Both crew were killed. Pilot Officer Leslie 'Dutch' Holland and Flight Sergeant Bob Young, pilot and navigator on a 515 Squadron Mosquito had just landed Little Snoring from an air-interception training exercise, left their fully armed Mosquito on its dispersal hard standing, parked their gear in the 515 Squadron hut and were sauntering back up the lane towards the messes. 'Dutch' Holland recalls: There were several returning aircraft in the vicinity all making very familiar noises when we noticed that one was being followed by an aircraft with a distinctly unfamiliar note. I had just time to say to Bob, 'By God it's a Jerry!' when a stream of tracer streaked across and, as they were only at about 1,500 feet [we] could see the flicker of strikes. The stricken aircraft had its landing lights on ready for joining the circuit and was naturally not expecting any trouble. The lights went into a descending curve out of sight behind the trees. No flak, no fire.'

Halifax III NA107/T of 171 Squadron, piloted by Squadron Leader P. C. Procter, the 'B' Flight Commander, was brought down by a Ju 88 while heading for North Creake at 3,000 feet on returning from a 'Mandrel' sortie.

It crashed at Walnut Tree Farm, South Lopham after the crew of eight parachuted out at around 1,000 feet. Warrant Officer A. P. Richards, the mid-upper gunner sustained a broken ankle while the flight engineer, Flight Sergeant H. Laking, 'apparently under the impression that there was no hope of survival and anxious to save time and money in transportation', glided into a cemetery!

On Monday ops were under way at Elvington at midday but at 3 o'clock the operation was cancelled. That night the moonlight was bright and at 2000 hours the loudspeakers announced: 'Attention, attention! Threat of an intruder raid!' 'The uncertain noise of aircraft' wrote Jules Roy. 'One thing is certain: yesterday Bomber Command was completely at the mercy of the German fighters and in its most vulnerable spot, the bases. Why did the Luftwaffe not develop this technique earlier? Sixty night fighters, as they did yesterday, can keep a thousand bombers on the ground or inflict such losses on them that the raids would have to be abandoned. The final figure is not known and will perhaps never be known. No information has filtered through, but the MO told me that there were fifty victims of last night buried in the Harrogate cemetery, among whom were the four Germans and this is not the only cemetery of our base. The English families always ask for the bodies to be transferred.'

Wolfgang Schnaufer, who destroyed five Viermots in March to take his final score to 121 bombers in 130 sorties (114 of his kills were four-engined Stirlings, Halifaxes and Lancasters), planned another operation similar to Unternehmen 'Gisela'. He intended to commit his entire NJG4, sixty aircraft in all, to a mass interception of a bomber stream over the Channel whilst the heavies were on their way back from a night raid. He fully realized that he might only pull it off once, but he expected to be able to destroy at least 100 bombers. He had the detailed plans for this Unternehmen 'Feuersee' (Operation 'Sea of Fire') all worked out by January 1945, but, as he declared after the capitulation a few months later: 'The war was already over by the time I got the go ahead through the official channels'.

Near Dortmund on the night of 3/4 March Hauptmann Georg Hermann Greiner of 11./NJG1 had scored a further three victories to take his score to 51. Hauptmann Josef Kraft of 12./NJG1 claimed two Lancasters west of Münster. On the night following, 4/5 March, Major Werner Husemann of Stab 1./NJG3 claimed two Lancasters, one of them east of Aarhus and the other at Boutanger Moor. In total he claimed 34 Night-Abschüsse in over 250 combat sorties. The last thirteen victories were claimed with Oberfeldwebel Hans-Georg Schierholz as his bordfunker.

During early March when Luftwaffe 'Intruders' made brief but damaging reappearance over eastern England many Mosquito crews talked confidently of getting more victories. At West Raynham, Norfolk the nights went by with excitement at fever pitch because 239 Squadron were chasing their fiftieth victory. This was achieved on the night of 5/6 March when Operation 'Thunderclap' resumed with a raid by a 760-strong force for a fire raid on Chemnitz to destroy the built-up area, industries and railway facilities. In a separate attack, 248 Lancasters and ten Mosquitoes attacked

the synthetic-oil refinery at Böhlen, which was covered by cloud. Wing Commander Walter Gibb DSO DFC the CO and Flying Officer 'Killer' Kendall DFC destroyed two Ju 88s at Chemnitz. One of these was Ju 88G-6 C9+GA of Stab NJG5 flown by Oberstleutnant Walter Borchers, Kommodore NJG5, which crashed north of Altenburg, 25 kilometres northwest of Chemnitz after he had claimed two Viermots. Borchers, a 59 victory 'Experte' of which sixteen had been scored by day and 43 by night and his radar operator Leutnant Friedrich Reul, were killed. The second Ju 88 to fall to Gibb's guns was Ju 88G-6 C9+NL of 3./NJG5, which also crashed near Chemnitz. Unteroffizier Hans Dorminger, a replacement pilot with no victories and Unteroffiziers Max Bartsch, first bordfunker and Friedrich Rullman, bordschütze and Obergefreiter Franz Wohlschloegel, second bordfunker were killed. Initially, Gibb claimed one 'destroyed' and one 'damaged' but the latter was subsequently confirmed. Hauptmann Kurt-Heinz Weigel of 11./NJG6 flying a Ju 88G-6 claimed his fourth victory, shooting down the Lancaster on 635 Squadron skippered by Flight Lieutenant John Cowden DFC; described by his CO as 'invincible'.[138] Only the rear gunner, Flight Sergeant John McQuillan survived. Flight Lieutenant James Davidson the 43-year old mid-upper gunner was among those killed. Later that night Weigel was killed at Brünnstadt near Gerotzhofen during aerial combat with a Mosquito NF.XXX on 406 'Lynx' Squadron RCAF flown by Squadron Leader Donald MacFadyen DFC RCAF and his navigator Flight Lieutenant 'Pinky' Wright.

Altogether, Bomber Command lost 21 aircraft[139] shot down en route to and returning from Chemnitz. Four Lancasters were shot down on Böhlen. This was the night that Major Eckhoff of II./NJG2 claimed five Viermots and he was to follow this with five more on the night of 7/8 March. Major Hubert Rauth of II/NJG4 claimed three Viermots on 5/6 March and Oberleutnant Kurt Matzak, a Halifax at 2030 hours for his thirteenth victory. Feldwebel Schuster claimed a Lancaster at 21.51 for his first victory. Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler destroyed a Viermot southeast of Zwickau for his 35th victory. Oberleutnant Karl Gerber of II./NJG100 in a Ju 88C-6 claimed a Wellington for his third Abschüsse. Oberfeldwebel Gerhard Graefe of IV/NJG1 claimed a '4-mot' for his third victory. Major Robert Hans Leickhardt commanding IV/NJG5 destroyed a Viermot for his 30th victory before his Bf 110G-4 (160669) was shot down and he was killed. Oberleutnant Joachim Sommerau of III./NJG1 claimed a Lancaster for his third victory. Hauptmann Paul Zorner claimed a Liberator SSE of Graz for his 59th Abschüsse.

At 1814 hours on the night of 7/8 March Fortress III KJ106 BU-G captained by Flying Officer George Stewart RNZAF with a cosmopolitan crew of nine representing four nations, lifted off the runway at Oulton. This 214 Squadron Fortress, one of fifty-six RCM aircraft on Bomber Support operations, was on a 'Jostle' patrol in support of a bombing raid on an oil refinery at Harburg by 234 Lancasters and seven Mosquito markers. The other Main Force targets this night were the Deutsche Erdoel refinery at Hemmingstedt near Heide, which was raided by 256 Halifaxes and 25

Lancasters and five Mosquitoes, and the town centre in Dessau, the objective for over 500 Lancasters. At Hemmingstedt there was slight heavy flak with about three searchlights, some light flak and considerable fighter activity in the target area. Four Halifaxes and a Lancaster were lost. Eighteen Lancasters were lost on Dessau and fourteen 'Lanki's' were lost on Harburg. Major Max Eckhoff of II./NJG2 destroyed five Lancasters for his 13th-17th victories. He was killed on 16 March when he bailed out of his Ju 88G-6 after being shot down by a RAF night-fighter two kilometres northeast of Buch near Gmeund/Wittenburg but he was too low. Unteroffizier Rolf Michelsen, funker, Oberfeldwebel Gerd Boese, second funker and Feldwebel Keunzel, bordshütze bailed out safely. Major Wolfgang Schnaufer of Stab NJG4 claimed his last three victories. Feldwebel Egon Engling of IV./NJG3 claimed three Lancasters for his 8th-10th Abschüsse. Oberleutnant Rehkate of III./NJG5 claimed a Lancaster and a Halifax for his first and second victories. Oberleutnant Georg Fengler of 10./NJG1 claimed two Lancasters for his 14th and 15th kills. Major Hubert Rauth claimed two Lancasters for his 29th and 30th Abschüsse. Feldwebel Hans Sieben of I./NJG1 claimed a Lancaster for his third victory and Oberleutnant Thurner of I./NJG1 claimed a Lancaster for his second victory. Feldwebel Helmut Burkhard of 1,/NJG5 flying a Ju 88 claimed a Lancaster SSW of Meinungen for his first victory. Oberleutnant Fritz Brant of IV./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster at Hamburg for his seventh Abschüsse. Oberleutnant Hans Heinrich Breitfeld of 9./NJG5 claimed a Halifax for his ninth victory. Hauptmann Fritz Brinkman shot down a Lancaster at Bremen for his fifteenth victory. Oberleutnant Erich Jung shot down a Viermot at Dessau and a Lancaster for his 20th and 21st victories. Hauptmann Werner Baake claimed a Lancaster twenty kilometres northwest of Boxmeer for his 43rd victory. Hauptmann Ludwig 'Luc' Meister of 1./NJG4 claimed a Lancaster north of Kassel for his 39th victory. Oberfeldwebel Heinz Misch of IV./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster southeast of Bremervörde for his tenth victory. Feldwebel Bruno Rupp of 4./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster for his twelfth victory. Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler claimed a Lancaster northeast of Erfurt for his 36th victory.

Two Halifaxes and Fortress III KJ106 in 100 Group, which crashed near Pippensen, three kilometres from Buxtehude between 2217 and 2230 hours, were also lost. There is some dispute about what caused the loss of the Fortress. One report states that the cause was flak and another source says it was a night fighter but according to Sergeant Ken Phelan the right waist gunner and Harry L. Henderson RCAF, the rear gunner, they were shot down by a Lancaster. Flying Officers George Stewart and Nicholas Peters RCAF the Special Operator and Flight Sergeant John William Winstone RNZAF, the bomb aimer and Flight Sergeant Hugh McClure McClymont the navigator were killed. On exiting the aircraft, Phelan smashed against the starboard tailplane, breaking his left leg and jaw and dislocating his shoulder. He was taken prisoner but at the end of the war he had to return to an RAF hospital for further treatment and recuperation. He and Warrant Officer J. Henderson, mid-upper gunner; Sergeant W. P Mulham, flight

engineer; Sergeant A. S. Goldson, left waist gunner and Flight Sergeant J. Matthews RAAF, W/Op, were taken into captivity.

On Thursday 8th/Friday 9th March Bomber Command forces attacked Hamburg and Kassel. A Halifax was lost on Hamburg and a Mosquito failed to return from Kassel. Halifax III MZ370 Z5-L on 462 Squadron RAAF was lost on a 100 Group Bomber Support sortie heading for Dortmund. Flight Lieutenant F. H. James RAAF and crew and the Special Operator were taken prisoner. Oberleutnant Peter Spoden of Stab II./NJG6 recorded his last two victories when he claimed two Lancasters near Dessau. However, his Ju 88 received hits from return fire resulting in the feathering of one engine. Losing altitude steadily, Spoden ordered the evacuation of the aircraft near Crailsheim. All four members of the crew safely bailed out. Hauptmann Helmuth Schulte claimed a Lancaster for his 24th victory. Oberleutnant Helmut Dietrich of 6./NJG2 piloting Bf 110G-6 620959 was shot down near Griesengen by a night fighter and was killed when he bailed out too low for his parachute to deploy. He had one victory. Hauptmann Georg Hermann Greiner took off in Bf 110G-4 (160127) to intercept RAF bombers raiding Dessau. Having made no contact with the bombers and beginning to run short of fuel, his aircraft suffered radio failure. Unable to home in on an airfield he ordered his crew to bail out. However, Greiner had difficulty exiting the aircraft and hit the rudder badly injuring his left knee and entangling his parachute in the trailing aerial of the aircraft. He finally managed to free himself and landed near a village in the Eifel region. The injuries he sustained in the incident were sufficient for him to see out the remainder of the war in hospital. He was awarded the Eichenlaub (No 840) on 17 April 1945.

On the night of 12/13 March when sixteen Lancasters and three Halifaxes carried out mine-laying in the Kattegat Hauptmann Eduard Schröder of 3./NJG3 claimed all three missing Lancasters, west of Samsø, south of Hov and 75 kilometres north of Bornholm for his 24-26th Abschüsse. Five of Squadron Leader S. Slater's crew on ME449/T on 103 Squadron, which crashed at Lyne in Jutland, survived and evaded capture; the two gunners died. RA526/J on 153 Squadron crashed off the Danish coast with the loss of Flying Officer Kenneth Albert Ayres DFC and five of his crew. Flying Officer James Paul Farrell RCAF and crew on NG233/E on 433 'Porcupine' Squadron were lost without trace.

On the night of 14/15 March 244 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes attacked the Wintershall synthetic oil refinery at Lützkendorf near Leipzig. Squadron Leader 'Dolly' Doleman DSO DFC and Flight Lieutenant 'Bunny' Bunch DFC on 157 Squadron shot down a Ju 88G at close range at Lützkendorf. American pilot Flying Officer (2nd Lieutenant) 'Hank' Gregor and his navigator/radar operator, Flight Sergeant Frank H. Baker in a Mosquito FB.VI scored 141 Squadron's final air-to-air victory of the war during a lone ASH patrol in the Frankfurt-Mannheim area in support of the bombers attacking Zweibrücken. Near Saarbrücken they picked up a contact coming into land at Lachen airfield. Gregor planned to intersect just short of the runway when a floodlight lit up the runway and the enemy

aircraft was seen. At about 2,000 feet Gregor opened fire at the 'silver shape' giving it one ring deflection and then spraying the area. He rapidly closed range to 100 feet and just as the Mosquito started to pull out the enemy aircraft exploded under their nose illuminating the area. Almost immediately they came under fire from light and not too accurate flak and they were coned by a searchlight. Gregor dodged the searchlight by turning into it and diving before hooking back on the stick and heading for home.

Eighteen Lancasters failed to return and 100 Group lost two Mosquitoes and a Fortress III on 214 Squadron during 'Jostle' radio countermeasure duties in support of the Main Force. Nachtjäger claims were for fifteen Lancasters and the Fortress. Hauptmann Martin 'Tino' Becker of Stab IV./NJG6 and his Funker Unteroffizier Karl-Ludwig Johanssen in a Ju 88G-6 claimed nine bombers, the highest score by a German night-fighter crew in any single night. Becker shot down six Lancasters of the Lützkendorf force. After expending his last ammunition on the sixth Lancaster he positioned his Ju 88G to the side of two more Lancasters and finally Fortress III HB802, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Norman Rix DFC. Unteroffizier Karl-Ludwig Johanssen manning the twin rear facing machine guns proceeded to shoot each one down in turn, a burst of gunfire hitting the Fort's No.2 engine and the RCM aircraft went down five kilometres southeast of Baiersbronn, west of Eutingen at 2337 hours. Johanssen's three victims counted towards the grand total of his pilot so the B-17 was Becker's 57th official victory. Johanssen was awarded the Ritterkreuz two days later.[140]

A second Fortress III also failed to return to Oulton. HB799 BU-K flown by Flight Lieutenant Johnny Wynne DFC flew at around 24,000 feet while the Lancasters flew towards the target at 20,000 feet. For the homeward trip the Lancs and the Forts were to fly at 3,000 feet above sea level to make it difficult for the German night fighters to locate and attack them but this made them more susceptible to flak and small arms fire. Flight Lieutenant Wynne, who although only 23, was already a veteran bomber pilot, comments: 'I had to obey orders ... I had trusted that the planners had routed the force away from towns, airfields and other places which would be defended by guns. We now know that this was not the case. Of the sixteen bombers shot down on this attack on the Lützkendorf oil installations almost all were brought down by light flak between Nuremberg and the Rhine.' (Wynne's Fortress was within half an hour's flying time of the Rhine when his aircraft was hit). 'I thought that we were being attacked by a night fighter from below. The fact that I did not see the flash means the gun was more or less vertically below us or slightly behind us. It would not have made much difference if I had seen the flash. We would still have been hit, perhaps in a fuel tank instead of the front wheel bay, which would have been bad news for us.'

Wynne flew on as the Fortress gradually lost height. By now he had flown 80 miles with the No.2 engine on fire and the fuel tank, which by now was half full, could explode at any time. He was sixty miles from the Rhine where the land south west of the river was occupied by the Allied

armies. Unfortunately, strong winds had caused the Main Force to fly further south and east of the planned track and the Fortress had been hit 25 miles east of the position recorded in the navigator's log. The No.2 engine gradually disintegrated but Wynne was sure that they had by now reached the safety of French territory. though his navigator, when asked, was unable to confirm their position. Wynne decided to give the order for his crew to bail out. He managed to keep the airborne and all nine men vacated the aircraft in less than five minutes but by the time Wynne was ready to bail out he was far too low and the aircraft refused to climb. Incredibly, the flames died down and finally the engine fire went out. Wynne somehow managed to level the aircraft off and cross the English Channel to crash-land at the American 91st Bomb Group Flying Fortress base at Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire. He was then sent on leave to await the return of his crew from France but five of the nine men who bailed out of HB799 never returned. They had been murdered in cold blood on the orders of the local Kreisleiter (District Leader).

On the night of 15/16 March when 267 bombers made an area attack on Hagen and another 257 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes raided the Deurag oil refinery at Misburg two 100 Group Mosquito crews were successful. Norwegian pairing Captain Eric Fossum and Flying Officer S. A. Hider on 85 Squadron destroyed a Ju 88 in the Hannover area and Flight Lieutenant 'Jimmy' Mathews and Warrant Officer 'Penny' Penrose on 157 Squadron got another Ju 88 twenty miles south of Würzburg. Six Lancasters and four Halifaxes failed to return from Hagen and four Lancasters were lost on the Misburg raid while a RCM B-17 was also lost. Four 'Experte' crews of NJG2 and NJG5 claimed thirteen victories. Hauptmann Gerhard Raht Gruppenkommandeur of I./NJG2 claimed five Viermots for his 54th-58th kills, almost all of his victories accomplished with his bordfunker, Anton Heinemann. Hauptmann Heinz Rökker Staffelkapitän of 2./NJG2 claimed two Viermots near Düsseldorf and a Mosquito and a B-25 at Sint-Truiden/Sint-Trond for his 62-65th kills; his last victories of the war. Fifty-five of his victories were at night.

The night following, 16/17 March 277 Lancasters and sixteen Mosquitoes attacked Nürnberg and 225 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes bombed Würzburg, the old cathedral city famous for its historic buildings and which, contained little industry. At Würzburg 1,127 tons of bombs were dropped with great accuracy in seventeen minutes. Würzburg suffered 89 per cent of its built up area destroyed and it was estimated that between 4,000 and 5,000 people were killed. During the night's operations thirty aircraft were lost, 24 of them Lancasters on the Nürnberg raid, mainly to German night fighters, which found the two Bomber Streams on the way to the target. One of the missing bombers was Lancaster PB785 'L Squared' on 576 Squadron which 25-year old Flight Lieutenant Frank Edmund Dotten RCAF from Selmah, Nova Scotia had taken off from Fiskerton at 1715. At 2030 hours Major Gerhard 'Gerd' Friedrich, Gruppenkommandeur of Stab I./NJG6, had taken off from Böblingen in Ju 88G-6 2Z+LB. He had claimed four Lancasters shot down near Pforzheim on the night of 23/24

February to take his score to 29 and had claimed a three more on the night of 14/15 March to take his score to 32. The award of the Ritterkreuz had followed shortly after. Near Stuttgart at 2100 hours Friedrich and Leutnant Lewerenz, Oberfeldwebel Giesen and Unteroffizier Meyer in the Junkers, attacked Dotten's Lancaster and the bomb load exploded, killing the German crew and all seven crew members on the Lancaster.

Oberleutnant Erich Jung, Staffelkapitän of 5./NJG2 in Ju 88G-6 4R+AN with his funker Feldwebel Walter Heidenreich and bordmechaniker Oberfeldwebel Hans Reinnagel had taken off from a grass strip about 800 metres long at the wrecked airfield at Langendiebach at 2014 hours. They returned to an airfield at Zellhausen near the River Main with claims for eight Lancasters, seven of them in twenty minutes. All except one of the Lancasters was destroyed by Jung with his 'Schräge Musik' and forward-firing guns. None of the 'Lanki's' took evasive action. After Jung had dispatched one or two of the Viermots Heidenreich could see that 'there were bombers all over the place' and he asked his pilot if he could have a 'go'. The funker had taken part in twelve kills with Oberleutnant Günther Köberich who had been killed in an American raid on the airfield at Quakenbrück in April 1944 and had fired at Viermots himself on several occasions but each time his guns had jammed after only three or four rounds. Heidenreich said to Jung, 'there's one in a fantastic position - throttle back.' Jung did and Heidenrich got off 94 rounds in one long burst before his guns jammed but he had found his mark and the port wing of the Lancaster caught fire and went down like a flaming torch. Jung's eight Abschüsse took his personal score to 28. It was Jung's final victories of the war. Hauptmann Wilhelm 'Wim' Johnen, Kommandeur of III./NJG6 claimed his 32nd and final victory of the war, a Lancaster southeast of Würzburg.

At 2206 Feldwebel Josef Brunner of 10./NJG6 in a Bf 110G-4 claimed a Lancaster east of Ülm for his seventh and final Abschüsse. At 2114 Hauptmann Helmut Gaul of Stab I./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster. Three minutes later Feldwebel Emil Weinmann of 11./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster at Stuttgart and he claimed a second at 2127 for his ninth Abschüsse. Hauptmann Helmut Gaul claimed a second 'Lanki' at 2230 for his fifth and final victory. Oberführer Helmut Bunje of 4./NJG6 claimed two Lancasters south of Schwabish Hall and Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler claimed two Lancasters also not far from Ansbach. Feldwebel Schuster of I./NJG5 destroyed a Lancaster north of Nuremberg at 2131. Twenty-three year old Leutnant Hans Rasper of II./NJG101 claimed a Lancaster northwest of Nuremberg at 2135. (Rasper was shot down by American ack-ack at Mittelfels near Cham on 26/27 April during a strafing run and taken prisoner). Two minutes later Oberleutnant Johannes Engels claimed a Lancaster north of the city for his fourth victory. At 2140 Leutnant Bruno Lange of 4./NJG6 claimed a Lancaster WNW of Nuremberg for his third victory. All told, 36 Abschüsse were claimed by Nachtjagd.

At 2118 hours Major Werner 'Red' Hoffmann of Stab I./NJG5 in a Ju 88G-6 destroyed a Lancaster southwest of Schwabish Hall for his 49th

victory, a Halifax at Ansbach at 2126 hours for his fiftieth and a Lancaster east of Ansbach at 2130 hours for his 51st. Near Nürnberg the Ju 88G-6 was shot down by Squadron Leader Dennis Hughes and Flight Lieutenant 'Dickie' Perks on 239 Squadron. All the crew bailed out, Hoffmann suffering severe bruising to his chest from a hard landing after deploying his parachute too early. It was the third time he had had to evacuate his flaming aircraft. On 20 January 1944 Hoffmann had bailed out over Berlin when his aircraft was damaged by return fire from a Lancaster. On the night of 28/29 January he shot down three Halifax bombers raiding Berlin and claimed two Lancaster bombers shot down the next night. Hauptmann Hoffmann was awarded the Ritterkreuz for 31 victories in May 1944. On 29 June Hoffmann shot down a Viermot but again bailed out when his aircraft received hits from defensive fire from the bomber. On the night of 7/8 July he shot down three RAF bombers. Deployed to East Prussia, Hoffmann claimed four victories over Soviet-flown aircraft around Libau during December 1944. By early 1945 Hoffmann had 44 victories. Following the Soviet offensive on 12 January, Major Hoffmann flew ground-attack operations against ground forces. He claimed a further seven victories during 1945. On 1 May Hoffmann joined 7./NJG3 at Husum. Following three months internment in the PoW camp at Wiedelah he was released.

On the night of 17/18 March there was no Main Force activity but a sweep by 66 Lancasters and 29 Halifaxes was made over Northern France to draw German fighters into the air and formations of Mosquito bombers carrying 'Cookies' visited targets in Germany. All of the 81 Mosquito bombers returned safely but 100 Group and 2nd TAF each lost a Mosquito. Oberleutnant Kurt Welter of II./NJG11, supposedly one of the top scoring 'Wild Boar' pilots during the Battle of Berlin, claimed two Mosquito victories. Feldwebel Heinz Hommel of 7./NJG2 claimed a Lancaster at Hull. He was wounded in action on 3/4 April near Stolzeneau by ground fire during a ground strafing attack in a Ju 88G-6. Over England Lancaster NG132 BQ-E2 on 550 Squadron at North Killingholme, which was being flown by Flight Sergeant Alfred Churchill Lockyer RNZAF and crew so that they could make their first flight since joining the Squadron from 1654 HCU took off in the afternoon when it was still daylight, on a flight that would last well into the night. The flight plan included a cross country navigation exercise, fighter affiliation and bombing practice. The cross country flight was completed but the fighter affiliation did not take place and the Lancaster headed for the Wainfleet bombing range with lights on and guns unloaded. Sergeant Ted Drawbridge, the flight engineer recalled: 'It had been dark for some time when, with about two-thirds of the practice gone, the range called us up to say, 'return to base'. On arrival at where Alf Lockyer expected North Killingholme to be, he could see no sign of the runway lights or of the Morse beacon. Alf asked Sergeant William Berry, navigator for confirmation of our position and was told that base should be in sight. Sergeant Leslie Elliott the wireless operator was then instructed to call base and ask what was going on. We were now at 4,000 feet and beginning to realise that something may be amiss. Before he could complete

his message, the call came back, 'Douse lights - Bandits!' Immediately the lights were switched off and simultaneously Sergeant Denis Lucey the southern Irish rear gunner called, 'Down port, go'. We corkscrewed and lost the night fighter.' It was, as Drawbridge thought, a Ju 88, which was crewed by Feldwebel Rudolf 'Rudi' Morenz and his bordfunker, Otto Dombrowsky of IV./NJG2 who had taken off from Vechta on their third combat operation. Dombrowsky recalled: 'Again we found a bomber. This time the Lancaster flew straight and level as we came from behind and fired. It soon caught fire and then crashed in flames.'

Alf Lockyer ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft but only Drawbridge made it out safely. He telephoned his report through to the airfield. The policemen on duty told me that there were no other survivors.' Ted Drawbridge was taken to Raunceby Hospital where he stayed for ten days. Then after fourteen days sick leave he returned to operations.[141] An official RAF report on the night's operations stated that eighteen enemy aircraft had reached the coast at 2100 hours and mingled with a number of 92 Group aircraft which were returning from a training flight which was used as a feint for Bomber Command operations. No radar indication had been received, but the 'Y' (radio interception) service heard six Ju 88s taking off from Twente and ten more from Leeuwarden. This news did not reach Fighter Command until 2130 hours and their Mosquitoes were unable to make any interceptions. The anti-aircraft guns were unable to fire as the intruders were mixed with the bombers on the approach and they were flying too fast on their return.

On the night of 18/19 March when 324 Viermots carried out an area bombing raid on Witten Wing Commander Walter Frame Gibb and 'Killer' Kendall on 239 Squadron shot down a He 219 Uhu at Witten to take their score while on the squadron to five victories. Oberfeldwebel Dieter Erichsen destroyed a 'Lanki' at Hanau. Erichsen was wounded in action when he was shot down during his final approach at Geerolzhofen airfield by a Mosquito crewed by Flight Lieutenant F. D. Win RNZAF and Flying Officer T. P. Ryan RNZAF on 85 Squadron. Hauptmann Werner Baake, Kommandeur of I./NJG1 and his radar operator, Unteroffizier Rolf Bettaque bailed out safely. Baake had scored his 42nd and final victory, a Lancaster twenty kilometres northwest of Boxmeer, on 7/8 March). The Witten force lost eight aircraft, including six Halifaxes. Oberleutnant Friedrich Ballier of II.NJG2 flying a Ju 88G-1 claimed a Halifax for his first victory. Leutnant Kurt Stocker of III./NJG1 also claimed a Halifax as did Hauptmann Fritz Lau, fifteen kilometres northeast of Dortmund for his 24th Abschüsse. Major Herbert Lütje claimed a Lancaster at 0445 for his 49th Abschüsse.

Meanwhile, another 277 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes carried out an area raid on Hanau. Just one Lancaster was lost and two crews from NJG6 each claimed a Lancaster shot down. Warrant Officer D. A. Taylor and Flight Sergeant Radford on 157 Squadron, one of the Mosquito NF.XXX crews covering the Hanau raid, destroyed a Ju 88 of 10/NJG6 flown by 30-year old Oberleutnant Engelbert Heiner eight kilometres southwest of

Gelnhausen. Heiner had seen action with the Kondor Legion in the Spanish Civil War as a bomber pilot and flew with 9./KG27 in the French, British and Russian campaigns before joining Nachtjagd. He had eleven Night-Abschüsse in 165 sorties and had received the Ritterkreuz. He and his second funker, Feldwebel Rosenbaum and Unteroffizier Hübner, bordshütze were killed. Heiner's longtime first bordfunker, Oberfeldwebel Fritz Dietrich survived with serious injuries. It seemed that Nachtjagdgeschwader crews had little defence against the Mosquitoes. Even their SN-2 AI band could now be jammed since several Fortresses on 214 Squadron had each been fitted with six installations of the latest development of 'Piperack'.[142] Bomber Command's tactics of deception and radio counter-measures had reached a fine perfection.

On 20/21 March no less than three feint attacks took place in support of the Main Force attack on the synthetic oil refinery at Böhlen, just south of Leipzig, by 235 Lancasters and Mosquitoes. The 'Window' Force left the Main Stream soon after crossing the front line and made for Kassel, which was bombed. Further on, when closer to the true target, another 'Window' Force broke off and bombed Halle. The third feint force was provided by the 'Mandrel' screen which, after the passage of the heavies, re-formed into a 'Window' Force and attacked Frankfurt with flares. The Main Force's zero hour was set at 0340 hours on the 21st. Almost simultaneously 166 Lancasters headed for the oilfield at Hemmingstedt in Schleswig-Holstein far to the north of the first target. This attack was to commence at 0430 and together with the other attack involved Bomber Command's main effort.

The evening's diversions had begun at 2114 hours with a large-scale nuisance raid on Berlin when 35 Mosquitoes of the Path Finder force bombed the city. Just after 0100 hours the main Böhlen force crossed the English Channel on a south-easterly heading, while a few miles to the south a feinting formation of 64 Lancasters and Halifaxes from training units crossed the Channel on an almost parallel course. Here complications for the German radar operators began. By 0205 an eighty mile long 'Mandrel' screen comprising seven pairs of Halifaxes on 171 and 199 Squadrons was in position over northern France throwing up a wall of radar jamming through which the German early-warning radar could not see. Shortly after crossing the coast of France, the Böhlen force split into two streams. Hidden behind the 'Mandrel' screen 41 Lancasters broke away and headed off to the northeast. Meanwhile, fourteen Mosquito fighter-bombers on 23 and 515 Squadrons fanned out in ones and twos and made for German night-fighter airfields. Once there they orbited overhead for hours on end dropping clusters of incendiaries and firing at anything that moved.

At 0300 the training aircraft, which had by now almost reached the German frontier near Strasbourg, turned about and went home, their work done. At the same time, the two formations making their separate ways to the Böhlen refinery burst through the 'Mandrel' jamming screen. Seven Liberators on 233 Squadron and four Halifaxes on 171 Squadron went five minutes (about eighteen miles) ahead of the larger Böhlen force, laying a dense cloud of 'Window', which effectively hid the bombers following

them. Once over the Rhine, the more southerly of the two streams of bombers turned northeast straight towards Kassel. So far, there was no way in which the fighter controller could tell the real target for the night. At the time the bomber forces crossed the German frontier Hauptmann-Major Heinrich Ruppel, Jägerleitoffizier (JLO, or GCI-controller) of the Central Rhine defence area, seriously under-estimated the strength of the two approaching formations. He thought each force involved about thirty aircraft and that both might be 'Window' feints. As the reports from the ground observation posts began to come in however, it became clear that the southernmost of the two was much larger than he had estimated. No amount of jamming could conceal the roar of 800 aircraft engines. The 'spoofs', diversionary attacks and counter measures helped keep losses down to just nine Lancasters on Böhlen, one on Hemmingstadt and one of twelve Lancasters in a feint raid on Halle. Nevertheless, Nachtjäger claimed twelve 'Lanki's, a Stirling and a Fortress and two Viermots shot down.

One of the Viermots may have been a 223 Squadron Liberator VI on Bomber Support. TS526 6G-T flown by Flight Sergeant Norman Siddall Ayres was lost with just one survivor being taken prisoner. Three of the missing Lancasters were claimed shot down southwest and west of Kassel by Hauptmann Johannes Hager, Staffelkapitän of 6./NJG1 flying a Bf 110G-4 and whose crew consisted of bordfunker, Unteroffizier Walter Schneider and Obergefreiter Heinz Barwald, bordshütze. These were his 40th-42nd and final victories of the war. Hager never received official confirmation of six more victory claims; he had a total score of 48 Abschüsse. Major Walter Barte of Stab III./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster west of Hamburg for his twentieth victory. Major Hans Karlewski of Stab NJG2 claimed another Lancaster for his tenth victory. Feldwebel 'Rudi' Morenz claimed a Lancaster and a Stirling for his 6th and 7th Abschüsse. Feldwebel Helmut Burkhard of 1/NJG5 claimed Fortress III HB785 BU-A SSE of Aschaffenburg for his second victory. Twenty-two year old Flying Officer Robert Verdun Kingdon RCAF from Weston, Ontario and all ten crew was lost. An unknown pilot of III./NJG2 claimed a Lancaster in the Humber Estuary. This may have been Lancaster I RA530 on 57 Squadron at East Kirkby which crashed at Stickney, Lincolnshire. Twenty-eight year old Flying Officer Charles Alan Cobern RAAF, husband of Sheila Cosway Cobern, of Rose Bay, New South Wales and three of his crew were killed. The three others were injured, one so seriously that he died on 1 April.[143] Hauptmann Fritz Lau of 4./NJG1 destroyed a Lancaster 25 kilometres west of Kassel for his 25th Abschüsse. Lau would finish the war as a Hauptmann with 28 night victories (27 '4-mots' and a Mosquito) in 76 combat sorties and the coveted Ritterkreuz. Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler of 1./NJG5 shot down another Lancaster twenty kilometres southwest of Leipzig. As a Hauptmann with forty victories, he was awarded the Knights Cross on 20 March. Leutnant Siegfried Boy of 5./NJG5 flying a Bf 110G-4 claimed a 'Lanki' for his third victory. Major Hubert Rauth of II./NJG4 claimed a Lancaster for his 31st Abschüsse. Lastly, Major Herbert Lütje claimed a Lancaster at 0459 hours for his fiftieth Abschüsse.

On 21 March 178 aircraft carried out an accurate attack on the rail yards at Rheine and the surrounding town area for the loss of one Lancaster. Another 160 Lancasters raided the railway yards at Münster and a railway viaduct nearby for the loss of three bombers. A further 133 Lancasters and six Mosquitoes headed for Bremen and accurately bombed the Deutsche Vacuum oil refinery without loss. Twenty Lancasters on 617 Squadron attacked the Arbergen rail-bridge just outside Bremen and destroyed two piers of the bridge for the loss of one Lancaster.[144] That same evening 151 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes set off to raid the Deutsche Erdolwerke refinery at Hamburg and 131 Lancasters and twelve Mosquitoes sought a benzol plant at Bochum. Five Lancasters were lost; four of them from the Hamburg force and a RCM Fortress, which was supporting the Bochum force, also failed to return. Thirty-year old Flight Lieutenant William Donald Allies and crew on Fortress III KJ112 BU-P on 214 Squadron were lost without trace. Fortress III HB803 BU-L on 214 Squadron flown by Flying Officer Peter J. Anderson was attacked by a Ju 88 night fighter flown by Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler who claimed the Fortress as destroyed at 2246 hours, ten kilometres northwest of Mayen. The rear gunner drove off their attacker and the Fortress was severely damaged by 'Schräge Musik' cannon fire, which started fires in the fuselage and port wing but Anderson managed to make Allied lines, only to be shot down in error by American anti-aircraft gunners who opened up thinking the Fortress was a Me 262. The Fortress crashed six kilometres south of Kruft, a town on the western side of the Rhine. Warrant Officer Maurice Charles White RAFVR the 25-year old wireless operator and Flight Lieutenant Jaques Edward 'Ted' Cryer RAFVR, the 23-year old wireless operator, were killed.

Hauptmann Dietrich 'Dieter' Schmidt, Staffelkapitän 7./NJG1 scored his 40th and final kill; a Lancaster near Cologne at 0431 hours (probably NG466 AR-Y on 460 Squadron RAAF, flown by Flight Lieutenant D. H. Heggie RAAF which had left Binbrook at 0111 hours. Five of Heggie's crew were killed and rest in Rheinberg War Cemetery). Only one other Nachtjäger - Hauptmann Josef Kraft of 12./NJG1, a 23-year old Viennese - claimed a Lancaster near Bochum for his 51st Abschuss.

Mosquito crews claimed three Bf 110s on 21/22 March. One went to a 604 Squadron crew on NF.XIII MM466/G in the Dhünn area. Flying Officers Ralph Britten DFC RCAF and L. E. Fownes DFC on 409 'Nighthawk' Squadron RCAF in a NF.XIII and Flying Officers K. Fleming and K. L. Nagle on 488 Squadron RNZAF in a NF.XXX claimed the other two. No less than 142 Mosquitoes of the LNSF carried out two attacks on Berlin, some of the aircraft and crews making two sorties, while three more Mosquitoes attacked Bremen and seven of 5 Group dropped mines in Jade Bay and the River Weser. Fifty-six Mosquito patrols were flown and 2nd TAF squadrons too were airborne over the Reich. Two Mosquitoes; one from the attack on Berlin and a NF.XXX of 2nd TAF failed to return, though claims for four Mosquito kills were submitted by the Me 262 pilots of II./NJG11. One of the claims was by Feldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker for a Mosquito ten kilometres southwest of Berlin. Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach and

Oberleutnant Kurt Welter each claimed two Mosquitoes.

On 22 March raids on rail yards in daylight continued with 227 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes attacking Hildesheim for the loss of four Lancasters. These were the only losses from a total of 708 sorties in which Dülmen was bombed in an area attack by 130 Halifaxes, Lancasters and Mosquitoes and 124 Halifaxes, Lancasters and Mosquitoes raided targets at Dorsten while 102 Lancasters in two forces attacked bridges at Bremen and Nienburg and destroyed the bridge at Nienburg. That night seventy Mosquitoes attacked Berlin, Padeborn and Bochum, Twenty-one Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes laid mines in Oslo Fiord. Two Mosquito Intruders of 100 Group failed to return but the only Nachtjagd claims were a Fortress by Hauptmann Josef Kraft of 12./NJG1 and a Stirling by Hauptmann Arnold 'Fritz' Brinkmann of 8./NJG3 northwest of Vlieland.

On the night of 23/24 March 195 Lancasters and twelve Mosquitoes carried out the last raid on Wesel. No aircraft were lost but two Mosquitoes failed to return from a raid by 65 Mosquitoes on Berlin. On 24/25 March when 67 Mosquitoes visited Berlin and eight went to Nordheim (38 RCM sorties and 33 Mosquito patrols were also flown) Mosquito night-fighters destroyed four German aircraft. Two Mosquitoes were claimed destroyed by Me 262 jet fighters of 10./NJG11. Oberleutnant Kurt Welter claimed one and two more were credited to Feldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker three kilometres south of Fehrbellin. On 25 March Bomber Command flew 606 sorties against the main reinforcement routes into the Rhine battle area and Hannover, Münster and Osnabrück were heavily hit. Four bombers were lost (three to flak and one due to being struck by a bomb over the target). That night, as eight Mosquitoes raided Berlin, Mosquito fighters claimed four German aircraft shot down and a Ju 88 as a 'probable'. Feldwebel Josef Brunner of 10./NJG6 bailed out of his Bf 110G-4 during a night sortie in the Oppenheim area but his bordshütze, Unteroffizier Franz Felbemaier and funker, Unteroffizier Horst Römer, were killed. There were no RAF losses but Oberleutnant Paul Fehre of 5./NJG3 claimed a Mosquito for his seventh Abschuss and Leutnant Hans Meissner claimed a Liberator. On 26/27 March 86 Mosquitoes attacked Berlin and Mosquito night-fighters claimed five aircraft shot down.

The small number of German jets operating under the most drastic conditions were it seemed, always on the move from one place to another (from Magdeburg to Lübeck and finally Schleswig) as their airfields were bombed and strafed constantly by the advancing Allies. Me 262s needed a big airfield with a runway up to 2000 metres, which the pilots called 'Silberplatze' or 'silver fields' but the situation became so bad by April that they had to operate from the Hamburg/Lübeck autobahn. On 7 May 1945 from his last 262 airfield at Schleswig-Jägel, rather than waiting to surrender to the British, Leutnant Herbert Altner of II./NJG3 simply got on his bike and pedaled home!

Endnotes Chapter 11

127 On 23 November 1944 Schmid was made commander of the Luftwaffenkommando West, formerly Luftflotte 3. His leadership qualities were disputed to end of the war. Schmid commanded the German forces involved in Unternehmen (Operation) Bodenplatte on 1 January 1945. 'Beppo' Schmid died on 30 August 1956.

128 HB815/J was shot down at 0016 hours and crashed at Lodge Farm, Oulton. Fortress II KH114/B on 214 Squadron was damaged on return and landed at RAF Woodbridge, Suffolk. Flight Sergeant R. V. Kingdon and crew safe. Fortress II HB802/O was attacked over Peterborough and landed at Brawdy. Liberator 'B' on 223 Squadron was in the circuit at Oulton when tracer was fired at it. Although it was hit, the B-24 was able to land safely.

129 Confounding the Reich: *The RAF's Secret War of Electronic Countermeasures in WWII* by Martin W. Bowman and Tom Cushing (Pen and Sword Aviation 2004).

130 Although the German crew identified this aircraft as a 'Lancaster' it was more likely Halifax III HX332 ZA-V on 10 Squadron at Melbourne flown by Flight Lieutenant John Gifford Laurence Laffoley RCAF which crashed on Spellow Hill, Staveley, six miles southeast of Ripon. Laffoley and four of the crew were killed; three were critically injured.

131 See *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945*; by Simon W. Parry (ARP 1987, 2003).

132 On the French squadrons the bomb aimer was captain of the aircraft regardless of rank.

133 *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945*; by Simon W. Parry (ARP 1987, 2003).

134 See *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945*; by Simon W. Parry (ARP 1987, 2003).

135 *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945*; by Simon W. Parry (ARP 1987, 2003).

136 Roy, W. R. Chorley and Simon W. Parry.

137 See *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945*; by Simon W. Parry (ARP 1987, 2003).

138 *The Pathfinder Companion* by Sean Feast (Grub Street 2012).

139 13 Lancasters and 8 Halifaxes.

140 Becker's score at the end of the war was 58 night victories.

141 See article in *Intercom*, spring 1994 and *Intruders Over Britain: The Luftwaffe Night Fighter Offensive 1940 to 1945* by Simon W. Parry (Air Research Publications, 1987 and 2003).

142 An American development of the 'Mandrel IV' device. Known as 'Dina II', when used against the FuG 220 Lichtenstein SN-2 radar, the device was known as 'Piperack'.

143 Those who died were the navigator, Flying Officer Frederick William Calderbank RAFVR; flight engineer Sergeant Kenneth Ashun RAFVR and air gunner, Sergeant Alan Ramsbottom. The bomb aimer, Flight Sergeant William William Stacey Searby succumbed to his wounds and passed away on 1 April The subsequent board of enquiry established that the inner port engine caught fire immediately after takeoff. The flight engineer was unable to get the prop feathered and the pilot tried to gain height too quickly causing the Lancaster to stall. The cause of the fire was one defective bolt in the Big End assembly.

144 One aircraft was lost from the Bremen raid: Lancaster B.I (Special) PD117 on 617 Squadron was hit by flak from the railway-mounted flak battery 2./902, the aircraft exploding with tremendous force with its full bomb load on hitting the ground at Okel, S of Bremen, leaving a crater 40 metres wide. Only small fragments were found of the a/c and its 5-man crew, all of whom are commemorated of the Runnymede Memorial for the Missing of the RAF. The B.1 Special Lancaster had a crew of 5 instead of the usual seven.

Chapter 12
The Kings Of The Earth

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Revelation 16.16

At Burg airfield near Magdeburg on 27 March Oberleutnant Kurt Welter, 'Kommando' Welter's controversial Kapitän, climbed into 'Red 10', his Me 262B-1A/U1, strapped in and touched 'Bonzo', his cloth dog talisman, which accompanied him on every sortie. It was 2058 hours. Eighty-two Mosquitoes had taken off from airfields in Eastern England a little after 1900 hours and were approaching Berlin. Welter, born at Marienbad, Czechoslovakia on 25 February 1916 had joined the Luftwaffe in 1934. He showed a strong natural ability as a pilot and was subsequently selected for flight instructor training and served many years as a flying instructor. In 1943 Welter transferred to an operational night fighter unit flying contemporary piston engine fighter aircraft. On 18 October 1944, after forty combat sorties, Welter was awarded the Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes. In early 1945 he transferred to an experimental jet night fighter unit flying the Messerschmitt Me 262. On 11 March he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub) for 48 aerial victories. Claims made by 'Wild Boar' pilots in single-seat fighters were hard to corroborate and it is doubtful that Welter achieved anywhere near these figures. Even some of Welter's pilots were known to describe him as a 'braggart' and that he had no particular gift for air-to-air firing.[145] Leutnant Kurt Lamm, an experienced instructor who knew Welter in the autumn and winter of 1943-44 when both men were 'Wild Boar' pilots in 5./JG301 and during their instructing days at the Pilot Training School at Quedlinburg , was one who would not agree.

'Welter had an exceptional feeling for the game of night-fighting. We were both very experienced in flying on instruments. During August 1943 we were trained in the 'Wild Boar' illuminated night fighting on the Me 109 and FW 190. Kurt Welter was a brilliant pilot and soon after our posting to 5./JG301 he scored his first kills in the Schleswig-Hamburg area. Only experienced pilots were able to achieve successes in the single-engined Nachtjagd, as became clear over the following months. They had to do the flying, navigating, calculating, reading the phosphorescent dials and digital clocks and interpreting the often strongly distorted and jammed information which came in over the R/T single-handedly. Moreover, they

had to interpret the flares and waving searchlights correctly, combat the bombers, avoid being deluded by the glaring searchlights and finally, find an illuminated airfield and land with the last remaining drops of fuel. This all bordered on the limits of what our brain and body were able to cope with.'

Lamm had flown daylight sorties against the American combat boxes in the summer of 1944 and scored just one victory, a USAAF B-24 near Wiener-Neustadt in Austria. After he destroyed the Liberator he was shot down by return fire and severely wounded. In February 1945 he was finally fit for flying duties again and he completed training on the Me 262. He had to carry out the whole sequence of events of starting up and switching off blindfolded. After two days of basic instruction and then a more thorough instruction Lamm began to practice starting up, hearing the turbines roar and taxiing the jet out. On take-off the 262 pilot had to shove the throttle forward whilst constantly checking the temperature, which should not exceed the 750°C mark, otherwise the blades in the turbines were deformed, which usually led to a crash immediately after taking off. When throttling back at great height, the turbines could break down due to lack of oxygen necessary for the combustion process; the rotation velocity of the turbine blades became too small. Yet in-flight re-starting of the turbines was possible.

On the night of 27/28 March Welter was to lead three Me 262As of 10./NJG11 off for a sortie west of Nauen as Mosquitoes were reported approaching the Reich capital. Oberfeldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker and Lamm and one of the other Me 262 pilots would accompany him and one other pilot on the anti-Mosquito operation. Welter had telephoned Becker on 15 December 1944 and asked that he travel to Rechlin-Lärz where the Staffel 10./NJG11 was formed with ten single-seaters and two additional reserve aircraft. In January the unit had moved to Burg which became the regular operational airfield. By 27/28 March Becker had scored five Abschüsse and was looking for more.

Kurt Welter instructed Lamm: 'You will be the last one to take off, as this will enable you to see the illuminated flare path in time on your return. The vertical flak-searchlights positioned to the left and right of our path of final approach are our 'gate' through which we must fly'.

Lamm's 262 rolled forward and the speed increased. Just before the end of the runway he lifted his machine up and operated the undercarriage lever before making a quick check of the engine instruments; especially the temperature of the turbines. But, soon after taking off, whilst still at low level, the undercarriage of his aircraft dropped suddenly. 'This was the first surprise. My vast flying experience and fast reactions came to my rescue. I immediately put the aircraft's nose down, went over into horizontal flight, pressed the button for 'undercarriage up' and I was lucky. The undercarriage stayed locked up. The thought crossed my mind that most other, less experienced, pilots would have crashed in similar circumstances.'

Lamm turned on his FuG 16ZY radio transmitter/receiver and found

the fighter frequency 'Bavaria'. As soon as the efficient IFF lit up the control lamp on the ground radar he had to say over the R/T to the Jägerleitoffizier, 'Habe grosse Freude' ('Having a jolly good time'). Each one of the jet pilots had their own JLO, or GCI-controller. On receiving this message contact with the GCI station was established. A short call, 'Bavaria from Scwalbe 4, please come in', a few seconds pause and then 'Bavaria' came on and gave the first instructions clearly and exactly. Lamm then made his way toward Berlin whilst climbing at twenty metres a second. 'Over Berlin, concentrations of searchlights attempted to catch the enemy bombers in their cones. Then we got into range of our adversary. The first one I heard over the R/T was Welter. He exclaimed 'Pauke' and 'Horrido' to announce his first success of the night. Subsequently, each one of us shot a Mosquito down in flames to crash into the ruins of Berlin. Then once more, Welter shouted 'Horrido'. Two successful interceptions in one sortie; he was the only one who could pull that off.

'During our flight back to base at Burg, we received the warning of Mosquito intruders lurking in the vicinity. It was their tactic to try and pick us off from behind on final approach. After having passed through the 'gate' the two searchlights immediately formed a cone and the light flak defences hosed up their ammunition into the cross of light. This saved my skin. When I had touched down and taxied into the dispersal area I was informed that one Mosquito, which had actually followed me in had been shot down.

'Whilst my machine was being towed into the hangar, the mechanic Schwarzemänners observed. 'You have brought home the confirmation of your kill. Look at the dents in the leading edge of the wing'. I had rushed towards the fast bomber aircraft with a speed of 850 kph [530 mph] and was so fascinated by the action that I had opened fire a bit on the late side. The burst of fire from my four 30mm cannons had torn up the Mosquito and I had to pull away steeply to avoid getting hit by the debris flying around. Kurt Welter was not pleased when he saw the dents in my machine and warned me to keep a better eye on the difference in speed during the coming sorties.'

Throughout the attack on Berlin the searchlights were active across the city and a jet fighter was spotted in the area on the 128 Squadron bombing run. Flight Lieutenant Jim Dearlove and Sergeant Norman Jackson's Mosquito was coned and was attacked by a Me 262 of 10./NJG11 just after they had dropped their 'Cookie'. He fired two short bursts of cannon fire, which missed the Mosquito and Dearlove was able to take evasive action and escape. Feldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker claimed two Mosquitoes west of Nauen for his sixth and seventh Abschüsse and the Staffel's 27-28th. One of the victims north of Brandenburg was Mosquito B.XVI MM131 XD-J on 139 (Jamaica) Squadron flown by Flight Lieutenant Andre Anton Johannes van Amsterdam, a Dutch escapee decorated with the DFC and the Vliegerkruis (Dutch AFC), which had taken off from Upwood at 1912 hours for Berlin. Becker recalled: 'The visibility was bad and I did not succeed in getting a target aircraft that was caught in the beam of a searchlight so I

flew back on a reciprocal course. I spotted a long vapour trail from a Mosquito, which was dropping cascades. I turned towards it and slowly got closer to the target. At 2138 hours and flying at a height of 8500 metres [27,600 feet] I clearly saw the target and opened fire at 150 metres whilst pulling up the nose of my aircraft. I hit him squarely. Pulling away to the left I observed large burning parts of the Mosquito falling and scattering the ground in sector FF5 near Nauen. After landing I found that a part of the Mosquito had left a dent in the right turbine cowling of my Me 262. I had used 29 shells of 30mm ammunition.' Squadron Leader H. A. Forbes DFC, the navigator/bomb aimer escaped and was taken prisoner but no trace has ever been found of his pilot. Flight Lieutenant van Amsterdam is commemorated on panel 266 of the Runnymede Memorial.

Becker claimed another Mosquito at 2152 hours on 30/31 March when B.XVI RV341 on 692 Squadron crewed by Flight Sergeants Walter Campey and Joseph Rabiner RCAF was lost without trace on the raid on Berlin by 43 aircraft. Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach claimed a Mosquito for his eighth victory and Kurt Welter claimed two for his 51st and 52nd victories. Becker claimed another Mosquito at Tegel (Berlin) on the night of 31 March/1 April when the only Mosquito lost this night was FB.VI PZ394/C on 418 'City of Edmonton' Squadron on patrol in the Zwolle area, which went missing near Osnabrück. Flight Lieutenant George Ketchen Graham and 24-year old Flying Officer Richard Thomas Styles were killed and are buried at Hoogeveen, Holland. On 2/3 April during a raid on Berlin Mosquito B.XX KB185/R on 139 Squadron and Flight Lieutenants Geoffrey Amos Nicholls DFC and Jack Evelyn Dawes DFC were lost without trace. When eight Mosquitoes on 157 Squadron made a 'Spoof' raid on Berlin in support of 95 Mosquitoes of 8 Group on 3/4 April Kurt Welter claimed another Mosquito for his 53rd Abschüsse and Leutnant Herbert Altner also claimed one for his 25th victory. Over the 'Big City' Flight Lieutenant J. H. Leland was coned by the searchlights and a Me 262 seeing its chance, made four attacks on the Mosquito. Two strikes were recorded on Leland's engines but he escaped his pursuer after spinning his aircraft and heading flat out for friendly territory. B.XX KB349 on 139 Squadron, one of five that went to Magdeburg, went missing with Canadian Squadron Leader Thomas Roy Asquith Dow DFC (who was on his 90th operation) and Flight Lieutenant Jack Stuart Endersby.

On 10/11 April when B.XVI ML963 on 571 Squadron, one of 77 engaged on a LNSF operation to Berlin, was abandoned after an engine fire en route to the 'Big City', Kurt Welter and Feldwebel Heinrich von Stade of II./JG11 both claimed the Mosquito. Flying Officer Richard D. Oliver and Flight Sergeant L. Max Young RAAF, who were on their 6th op, bailed out and landed on the west and east sides respectively of the River Elbe, evaded and returned to England. Oberleutnant Kurt Welter made the only Mosquito claim on the night of 11/12 April when B.XXV KB502 on 163 Squadron crewed by Flying Officer William Houghton and Flight Sergeant Lance Anthony Stegman RAAF failed to return. Welter claimed another Mosquito on the night of 13/14 April when NF.XXX NT494 VY-N on 85

Squadron crewed by Flight Lieutenant Hugh Thomas and Flying Officer Charles Hamilton DFC failed to return to Swannington; Hamilton was killed. Welter claimed another the night after when a Lancaster was the only aircraft shot down. Welter also made a claim for a Mosquito on 15 April when there were no RAF losses. On 17/18 April Welter made his final victory claim, a Mosquito, on a night when B.XVI PF505 on 608 Squadron failed to return from Berlin and another crashed in England. PF505 crewed by Flight Lieutenant G. C. Dixon RNZAF and Flying Officer Smith force-landed at Strassfeld airfield WSW of Bonn after the port engine failed after bombing. On touch down the undercarriage gave way and the Mosquito was wrecked. Both crew emerged from the wreckage unharmed. Altogether, Welter claimed ten Mosquitoes destroyed during March-April. Officially his final wartime score was 56 night victories including 33 Mosquitoes, making him the most successful 'Moskito-Jäger' (he claimed 59 and 36 respectively).

German jet interceptors were among the last desperate attempts to prevent an inevitable collapse of Hitler's Thousand Year Reich. By early 1945 almost all Allied bombing raids were flown by day, such was the aerial superiority enjoyed by American and RAF aircrews. In April Nachtjagd's 33 victories took total claims for 1945 to 528 Abschüsse but the Americans advanced ever closer to the Ruhr in the south and the British to the north. The writing was on the wall and night-fighter crews knew it. Hitler pinned his last hopes on Germany's jet fighters. Twenty-five year old Oberfeldwebel Hermann Buchner, recently married, on 18 January to Käthe a Red Cross nurse, had been awarded the Knight's Cross and had been retrained on the Messerschmitt Me 262 at Lechfeld by the 'Thierfelder Kommando' before joining the 10th Staffel, III/JG7 at Oranienburg near Berlin. A former ground attack pilot, born in Salzburg, Buchner had joined the Austrian Air Force in 1937. He flew 631 sorties in the Crimea and Romania and was shot down five times, wounded twice and scored 46 victories in the FW 190 in the East. Major Rudolf 'Rudi' Sinner, who had been appointed Kommodore of III/JG7 in January, was displeased to see so that few recruits earmarked for the Me 262 were from the fighter arm; they were almost exclusively naval air arm and transport and bomber pilots. Sinner, like Buchner was an Austrian by birth. After the annexation of their country, they had joined the Luftwaffe. During the invasion of Poland, Sinner had served with an anti-aircraft artillery unit before transferring to the Luftwaffe in 1940. By early 1945 the Gruppenkommandeur's victory total stood at 36, including 32 victories achieved in North Africa.

In March JG7 relocated to Parchim airfield in Mecklenburg east of Hamburg for operations against US bombers. Railway connections between Cologne and Dortmund no longer existed because of Allied bombing and strafing attacks and it took two days by crowded troop train for Buchner to travel from Cologne to Parchim. JG7 had about ten operational Me 262s. Normally they were armed with four 30mm Rheinmetall Borsig MK 108 cannon and R4M 55 mm high explosive rockets mounted in twelve's on

wooden racks under the wings for attacking bomber formations. The rockets which had eight fins in the tail which extended after launch, had about the same trajectory as the rounds from the cannon, so both could be aimed using the Revi gun sight without adjustment. At Parchim the days were hectic and Buchner and his fellow pilots were really in demand. JG7's mechanics were loyal and they worked tirelessly to keep the troublesome jets airworthy. The Junkers Jumo 004B-2 axial-flow turbojet unit fitted to the Me 262 was supposed to last from 25 to 35 hours but in practice they lasted only about ten hours' flying time. The prescribed time for changing and checking a unit was three hours but in actual practice it took eight to nine hours because of poorly fitting parts and the lack of trained staff. Despite its speed and performance at altitude, the Germans recognized that the Me 262 was not invincible. Its fuel consumption was enormous and that limited its range and endurance. It was particularly vulnerable during takeoff and landing. Allied fighter pilots made full use of this. 'Rudi' Sinner, however, added three confirmed victories to his tally flying the jet, including two USAAF B-24 bombers near Rathenow on 3 March. On 4 April Sinner led seven other Me 262s off from Rechlin. Emerging from the clouds shortly after take-off, the flight was bounced by P-51 fighters of the 339th Fighter Group. In the ensuing combat Sinner's aircraft was hit. With his face and hands badly burned, he bailed out at low level. (It was the third time he had had to bail out of his downed aircraft and twelfth time overall, being wounded five times). His parachute deployed at the last moment, but did not completely fill and he was hanging by just the left strap when he hit the ground heavily in a ploughed field and dragged into a barbed wire fence. He reported that the Mustangs then attempted to strafe him, but he feigned death and as the fighters departed he made his way to the safety of a deep furrow. Sinner's wounds were serious enough to keep him out of the rest of war. He was credited with 39 victories, including three Viermots and three flying the Me 262 jet fighter, in 305 sorties.

On 31 March there was something new for JG7 - an early scramble. 'We were still at breakfast in the dining room and the weather was not very good' recalled Oberfeldwebel Hermann Buchner. 'The cloud base was 150-200 metres above the ground. We flew with seven 262s led by Oberleutnant Franz Schall, an Austrian from Graz, one Schwarm and one Kette. Schall was a 26 year old pilot from JG54 with aerial victories. He had guts and a hand for a good formation. Our mission was against US units in the Hannover region, take-off was at 0900 hours. We climbed in tight formation into the clouds, heading westwards. The clouds just weren't coming to an end and Schall asked the ground station guiding us whether we should make 'Luzi-Anton'. A brusque answer came back over the radio, 'First of all make Pauke-Pauke' At 7500 metres above ground, we had just come out of the clouds, when Schall got the order: 'Assume course 180, 'Dicke Autos' course 180!' At the same moment, someone from our unit cried, 'To the right of us, nothing but bombers, to the right of us!' Schall, as well as the rest of us, saw the bombers, flying north in a formation that was new to us. They flew, staggered, about 1000 metres deep and 2000 metres wide. They

were not US bombers, however, but Tommies in night flight formation, doing a day-time attack on Hamburg. Schall ordered us to take up attack formation, already having long forgotten the order 'assume 180'. We were lucky to reach the band without fighter protection and Schall, a fighter with real heart, was not going to pass up a chance like this. As we got closer, we could clearly see what kind of bombers they were - RAF Lancasters - on their way to attack Hamburg, but still fifty kilometres away over the Lüneberg Heath.'[146]

For some weeks 419 'Moose' Squadron RCAF gunners had been sniffing jet exhaust in the air trails over Germany. One pair had skirmished briefly with Me 262s. It was not until 31 March however that the all-Canadian 6 Group RCAF squadrons were drawn into anything like a large-scale battle when the Blohm und Voss ship-building yards at Hamburg; an important centre of U-boat construction, was the target for a force of 428 Lancasters and Halifaxes. Of these nearly half came from 6 Group, including Lancasters and Halifaxes representing every one of the Group's fourteen squadrons. It had been intended that the bombers should pick up their escorts - twelve squadrons of RAF Mustangs - over Holland but the third wave of bombers in 6 Group was late at the rendezvous point and missed the escorts. Over the target area the leading Path Finder and other Lancaster formations became heavily engaged by at least thirty Me 262 jets, but had plentiful fighter escort protection and lost few bombers to the German jets. But there was no such protection for the third wave. At the rear of the stream, a gaggle of Canadian Lancasters ten minutes late over target found itself without the planned fighter cover and suffered heavily.

The jets materialized out of the overcast at 10,000 feet and with their great rate of climb, closed the remaining 10,000 feet vertical gap in a matter of seconds. In all, 28 crews on 419 battled with the Me 262s one or more times. 'H-How' flown by Flight Lieutenant Harry Alfred Metivier who had completed half a tour went down and he and his crew, most near the half-way mark of a tour were all killed. 'Q-Queenie', flown by Flying Officer Donald Stuart Maxwell Bowes and his crew, all of whom had reached or passed the half-way mark of a tour, was the second missing aircraft. Flight Sergeants G. R. Berry, R. W. Rowlands and W. H. Milne survived to become prisoners of war. Bowes, Sergeant John Rea, Flying Officer John Joseph Gladish and Flight Sergeant Bruce MacLennan were killed. Gunners on the five crews that returned fired at the jets nine times, but on only three of these occasions were their aircraft actually being attacked. Their inability to lay-off and maintain correct deflection because of the jets' tremendous speed was therefore, not surprising and despite the 1,200 rounds that they fired, no claims were made by 419 Squadron.

Oberfeldwebel Hermann Buchner, who now had eleven jet victories, recalled: 'On our first attack, there were seven Lancasters shot down with the R4M rockets. Now the large unit dissolved somewhat and the Rotten flew a renewed attack on the bombers. I made a right turn and lined up for another attack. This was made using the nose cannon. My Lancaster lay directly in my sights and I only had to get a bit closer. Now, I opened fire,

the hits were good, but the pilot of the Lancaster must have been an old hand. He turned his Lancaster steeply over on its right wing, making a tight turn around the main axis. With my speed, I was unable to follow this tight manoeuvre and was also unable to see if my shots had had any effect, or to see how he flew on. I shot through the pile and had to think about returning home. The other pilots were also having the same problem. We had a shortage of fuel and had to get back to our own garden. At the same time, all called to the ground control, 'Autobahn', the course number for the direction back to our home airfield.

'Only one of us could be handled by 'Tornado' ground control, but all of us wanted to be given a course. We were still all in the tangle of RAF bombers, but none of us had visual contact with each other. We all had to go back down through the cloud layer. I thought to myself, 'Go back down alone!' At 7000 metres, I dived into the cloud layer, laying on a course of 090, 700 km/hour and the engines running at 6000 rpm. Over the radio, I could still hear my colleagues calling 'Autobahn' to Tornado, they were all still in the air. My altimeter showed that I was quickly losing height and at 1000 metres, it was already dark, I had to get out of the clouds soon.'

'My altitude was diminishing, the gauge showed 500, 400, 300 metres - the ground must surely soon appear - yes, there it was. Doing 700 kph, I shot out of the clouds and found myself over fields and clumps of trees. Unfortunately, I didn't know quite where I was. On my left side, I could make out the sea, was it the Baltic, or where was I? Anyhow, I flew eastwards with a normal turbine rpm and at 800 km/hr. In the distance, I could see the silhouette of a town. I quickly thought about it and then I was sure that the town had to be Lübeck. I had recently seen a film called Die Budenbrocks in which the silhouette of the town had been shown. Flying over the harbour, I came under fire from light flak, but I was too fast, they had no chance of hitting me. Now I knew how I could get back.

'My other comrades were also on their journey back to Parchim and now the traffic with Tornado was quieter, so I could also call up and ask for instructions, giving him my location. I was the last 262 to call in after the mission at 7000 metres. Now, he had his flock together. By the time I reached Ludwigslust, I had already been given permission to land, as well as the comforting news that there were 'no Indians on the airfield'. After 65 minutes flying, I landed without difficulty in Parchim, the last of the seven. My list of aircraft shot down was extended, one Lancaster confirmed and one definitely damaged. Altogether, we had certainly shot down ten Lancasters and five others had been damaged'. The seven 262s on the mission had landed without problems after 60-70 minutes flying time in bad weather conditions. The reported aerial victories were confirmed by Jagddivision and the bombers had off-loaded their cargoes over the heath, far from their target. Around sixty flying personnel were taken prisoner on the heath. During midday, another mission was flown against US units.'

It was Buchner's 58th and final victory. He was shot down by flak on 21 April, force landing by a railway line by Klötze and taken prisoner. He had twelve jet victories.[147] Franz Schall, who had destroyed fourteen Viermots

in an Me 262, was killed during an emergency landing on 10 April at Parchim airfield after attacking USAAF bombers in the Hannover-Magdeburg area. His jet hit a bomb crater, causing his aircraft to explode. He had 550 sorties.

Of the eight RCAF Lancaster squadrons, 433 'Porcupine' at Skipton-on-Swale, was probably the most heavily engaged; with seven of its ten crews being attacked and fighting sixteen actual engagements. Two Me 262s attacked Squadron Leader P. D. Holmes' aircraft simultaneously from the rear and port quarters. Warrant Officer E. J. Ash in the rear turret opened up at the first jet and then was joined by his mid-upper, Warrant Officer V. M. Ruthig, in converging fire at the second. Their combined tracer hit the Me 262 in the wing, engines and nose and it broke away, scattering metal debris and pluming smoke as it plummeted downwards. Ruthig then coolly directed his skipper in necessary evasive action during five further attacks. He was later awarded the DFC. Another 'Porcupine' crew, captained by Flying Officer D. Pleiter, whose gunners were Flight Sergeants C. H. Stokes and M. A. Graham, claimed one jet as probably destroyed.

A Lancaster on 431 'Iroquois' Squadron at Croft, piloted by Flying Officer E. G. Heaven, was attacked by three Me 262s. In the rear turret Flight Sergeant Bill Kuchma lined his sights on the first at 700 yards and waited until it was a only fifty yards away before ceasing his fire; at which point the jet veered crazily to starboard, trailing smoke and debris and fell away. A second later its complete tail assembly tore away and the forward section tumbled over and over down into the clouds. Of the other two one was seen off with a thin trail of smoke pouring behind it. The Lancaster X captained by Flight Lieutenant P. J. Hurley was shot down and was believed to have crashed south of Hamburg. Hurley survived but all six crew were killed.

A Me 262 was claimed after it was sent down in flames by the combined firepower of a 428 'Ghost' Squadron Lancaster's gunners, Flight Sergeants R. C. Casey and A. E. Vardy; while Flight Sergeants C. K. Howes and S. J. Robinson, on a 424 'Tiger' Squadron Lancaster successfully countered two simultaneous attacks. Howes engaged one jet on the starboard quarter but had all four of his guns jam; while at the same time Robinson hammered a burst into the second German at dead astern. Its engines erupted in smoke and then the Me 262 fell away in a spiral dive obviously out of control and disappeared with blue flames rippling along the fuselage.

Seven 434 'Bluenose' Squadron crews reported ten combats, resulting in one Me 262 being probably destroyed and two others at least damaged. The Lancaster flown by Flying Officer Gilbert Paul Haliburton who was killed, crashed at Nettelnburg. Flight Sergeant Robert John Green also died but the rest of the crew survived and were taken prisoner.

For 429 'Bison' Squadron this was its first operation since converting from Halifaxes to Lancasters; with ten crews participating. Five were attacked, engaging in nine separate combats. 'V for Victor' flown by Flying Officer R. R. Jones was shot down. He and Flight Sergeant Rancourt survived to be taken prisoner but the five other crewmembers were killed.

Flight Sergeants D. H. Lockhart and R. Jones, rear and mid-upper gunners respectively on the Lancaster skippered by Flying Officer A. M. Humphries, both opened up on one Me 262, though all four of Lockhart's guns ceased firing after about twenty rounds. As the jet broke away however, Jones fired a fierce burst and the jet plummeted into the clouds apparently out of control and shedding metal from its starboard wing. On another 'Bison' Lancaster the mid-upper gunner, Flight Sergeant J. O. Leprich, was attacked directly over Hamburg. With his electrical firing circuit already out of commission, Leprich worked his guns with one hand, while hand-rotating the turret. He continued firing one gun after the other until the Me 262 was finally driven off by three escorting Mustangs which had returned to cover the Canadian 'straggler' formation. When last seen the Messerschmitt was spuming black smoke. Leprich was awarded a DFM for his cool courage and determination.

On a 427 'Lion' Squadron RCAF Lancaster Warrant Officer J. G. Jarvis was in the rear turret and he watched his tracers stitch along the belly of another jet as it rolled over and dived into cloud with dense black smoke trailing from its engines; though not before the Me 262's twin 30mm cannons had ripped chunks out of the Lancaster's fuselage, engines, elevators and rudders. Flight Lieutenant J. L. Storms piloted his aircraft back from Hamburg with one shattered aileron and a five feet chunk of one wing missing, but got the bomber down safely and earning for himself a DFC.

Five minutes of non-stop assaults cost five Lancasters (three other 6 Group aircraft had already fell victim to fighter attacks); totalling 78 individual attacks, with 28 crews later reporting actual engagements. Canadian gunners claimed four Me 262s destroyed, three 'probables' and four others damaged but no Me 262s were lost. The very speed of the jet fighter attacks was something entirely new to most of the RAF bomber crews and the official report on the action afterwards stated: 'The usual technique of the jet-propelled fighters appears to be an approach from astern or the fine quarters, possibly with a preference for slightly above, opening fire at 800-900 yards and closing rapidly to close range. In a few cases, however, fire was not opened until 300-400 yards. Combat reports stated that the closing speed of these fighters is so great that they frequently do not have time to fire more than one burst. More than one rear gunner reports that although he had opened fire at 900-1,000 yards he had only time to fire 200 rounds before the fighter broke away 3-4 seconds later at 30-50 yards and one stated he was unable to rotate his turret fast enough to obtain strikes on the fighter at this close range though he had opened fire at it at 900 yards...'

Altogether, eight Lancasters and three Halifaxes were lost on the raid. It was reported that three of the Lancasters and a 415 'Swordfish' Squadron Halifax at East Moor were shot down by the Me 262s. None of the returning Lancasters showed damage of any kind. The bombing results achieved on this raid can hardly be said to have justified the losses. Overcast conditions necessitated the exclusive use of sky-markers and though these were fairly

well grouped, the bombing concentration was considered, at best, only moderate. The only visible results were puffs of grey smoke pushing through the cloud during the later stages. Common to every crew report were remarks concerning the gaggle leader's unnecessary time wasting on the final leg, an error which was no doubt the sine quanon of the gaggle's subsequent vulnerable position. Bomber Command commented that an officer of more senior rank should have led the gaggle (pilot of lead aircraft was a Flying Officer).

During a series of defensive operations against RAF and US heavy bombers on 31 March, JG7 flew a total of 38 sorties with Me 262s and lost four aircraft. Allied records confirm that the jet fighters probably shot down 14 heavy bombers and two fighters, making this the most successful day ever for the Me 262.

It was not the last time that RAF Bomber Command encountered the German jets. On the afternoon of 9 April forty Lancasters attacked oil-storage tanks at Hamburg for the loss of two Lancasters, one piloted by 24-year old Flight Lieutenant Albert Paulton Greenfield DFC RAAF on 61 Squadron at Skellingthorpe. Greenfield was on his 33rd operation. At 1741 hours Lancaster QR-Y on 'B' Flight on 61 Squadron in the leading Vic of a formation had just released its bomb load when the German jets struck. Ted Beswick the mid-upper gunner, recalled:

'We had just left the target when suddenly the flak ceased and I saw several black specks in the sky behind us, growing larger every second and coming down on us at incredible speed. As I watched the Lancaster behind us, piloted by Flying Officer Greenfield, suddenly reared its nose up, burst into flames and then exploded. [Incredibly, two men on Greenfield's crew survived to be taken prisoner]. Out of this cloud of smoke and debris appeared a Messerschmitt 262 jet fighter, which continued its attack on us. 'Jimmy' Huck, our rear gunner, immediately opened fire. I could not depress my guns low enough to add to his stream of bullets, but I yelled to the pilot over the intercom to corkscrew like hell to port! This brought the Me 262 up over the port fin and rudder and I could clearly see its pilot. I got him fair and square in my sight and kept the triggers down, following him as he overhauled us. Then, as he was abeam, I and the rest of the crew saw black smoke begin to belch back from the cockpit area and the Me's nose pitched over in a vertical dive down out of sight.

'Incidentally, this was not the end of our troubles, for we then discovered that we had a 1,000lb bomb hung-up in the bomb bay. Over the sea we tried to get rid of it but could not dislodge it until we landed when the shock of landing did the trick. Unfortunately by this time we were on the ground and could clearly hear it rattling around, live, inside the bomb bay. We turned off the runway and held there while the armourers came running to us. They rigged a winch inside the aircraft and dropped cables through apertures in the fuselage floor. The bomb doors were then wedged open just enough for an armourer to get an arm through, make the bomb 'safe' and attach winch cables. Then they lowered it down. We may have had a 'shaky-do' that day but afterwards our hats went off to those armourers!'

During April RAF Mosquitoes claimed 45 German aircraft destroyed; the first on 3 April when Squadron Leader Dennis Hughes and Flight Lieutenant 'Dickie' Perks on 239 Squadron in a NF.XXX destroyed a Ju 188. On 4/5 April 141 Squadron dispatched its first Mosquito NF.XXX sortie when three joined twelve on 239 Squadron in a bomber support operation for the heavies attacking synthetic oil plants at Leuna, Harburg and Lützkendorf in southern Germany. Squadron Leader 'Tim' Woodman and Flight Lieutenant John Neville, who were serving at BSDU, destroyed a Bf 109 west of Magdeburg (Woodman's seventh confirmed victory of the war). Flight Lieutenant C. W. 'Topsy' Turner and 20-year old Flight Sergeant George 'Jock' Honeyman from Edinburgh on 85 Squadron destroyed a Ju 188 near Magdeburg. Altogether, 1,172 sorties were dispatched by Bomber Command. Eleven Lancasters and Halifaxes, including six Lancasters on Lützkendorf, were lost on the Main Force operations and three more Lancasters failed to return from 'Gardening' operations in the Kattegat. Hauptmann Eduard Schröder of 3./NJG3 claimed a Lancaster WNW of Anholt and another 'Lanki', 25 kilometres west of Klitmoller and another Lancaster 75 kilometres west of Stenbjerg for his 27-29th victories. Oberfeldwebel Hans Schadowski of 3./NJG3 also, claimed two Lancasters northwest of Hanstholm at 2338 and 2343 hours for his 17-18th Abschüsse.

On Sunday 8 April 440 aircraft bombed the shipyards at Hamburg and 231 Lancasters and eleven Mosquitoes attacked an oil refinery at Lützkendorf. Six Lancasters and their crews of the Lützkendorf force were shot down and a seventh crashed in England on return killing all the crew. Two Lancasters and three Halifaxes failed to return from the raid on Hamburg. Three 'Experten' of NJG5 - Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler, Major Werner 'Red' Hoffmann and Oberleutnant Peter Ehrhardt each claimed a Lancaster and Feldwebel Bruno Rupp of 4./NJG3 claimed a hat trick of Lancaster victories. Oberfeldwebel Rudolf Winn claimed at Fortress at 2236 hours but none were lost in 64 RCM sorties flown this night. Next day forty Lancasters carried out the last raid on Hamburg by Bomber Command aircraft when they raided oil-storage tanks and seventeen aircraft of 617 Squadron blasted the U-boat shelters in the already devastated city with 'Grand Slam' and 'Tallboy' bombs. Two Lancasters failed to return from the raid on the oil-storage tanks.

Next it was Kiel on the night of 9/10 April when 591 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes bombed the Deutsche Werke U-boat yards. The pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* was hit and capsized and the *Admiral Hipper* and the *Emden* were badly damaged. Wing Commander Howard C. Kelsey DFC*, CO, 515 Squadron and his navigator Flight Lieutenant Edward M. 'Smitty' Smith DFC DFM flew an 'Intruder' to Lübeck, a night-fighter base that was still active. Smith recalls: 'After a while we spotted a Ju 88 taking off in dark conditions and had difficulty keeping it in radar contact and slowing down sufficiently to keep behind it. The Ju 88 was climbing very hard, probably with flaps, however, it was shot at and we saw several strikes. After that all was quiet and we headed off towards Hamburg. I spotted an aircraft coming in behind us. We feinted to the right then circled hard to port,

coming in behind him in part moonlight. We had no trouble in shooting the Ju 188 down. We continued over Hamburg and dropped the 'Intruder' load of two 500 lb HE and 160 incendiaries.'[148]

Three Lancasters were lost and a Halifax failed to return from a diversionary operation to Stade when it crashed in France. Leutnant Arnold Döring and Hauptmann von Tesmar of IV./NJG3 and Hauptmann Heinz Ferger of III./NJG2 were the Nachtjagd pilots who claimed the Lancasters. Hauptmann von Tesmar was killed when he bailed out over the Kieler Bight. Heinz Ferger was killed on 14 April when he was shot down by a Mosquito during final approach to Lübeck airfield. Arnold Döring was credited with a total of 23 victories (thirteen at night including three victories recorded over the Eastern front) in 392 sorties (348 as a bomber pilot). Ten of his victories were by day, including seven claimed over the Eastern front and two USAAF B-17 four-engine bombers over the Western front. Döring was also very successful against ground targets, destroying 25 aircraft, 200 vehicles, about seventy wagons and locomotives, sixteen tanks, four ammunition wagons, one tank platoon, eight bridges and two ammunition dumps and sinking one gunboat, two tankers and two freighters. He was a recipient of the Knight's Cross.[149]

A Halifax and a Lancaster were lost on 10 April when 230 bombers attacked the Engelsdorf and Mockau rail yards at Leipzig. Nachtjagd pilots claimed six Lancasters, a Halifax and a Mosquito on 10/11 April when 307 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes attacked the rail yards in the northern part of Plauen and 76 Lancasters and nineteen Mosquitoes bombed the Wahren railway yards at Leipzig. All the bombers returned safely from the raid on Plauen but seven Lancasters were lost on Leipzig where the eastern-half of the yards were destroyed. Six of the losses were due to crews of NJG5 and NJG100, at least four of their victims crashing in the target area at Leipzig. Three of the Lancasters were claimed destroyed by Hauptmann Ernst-Georg Drünkler of 1./NJG5 for his final victories of the war. Halifax III NA240 Z5-'V-Victor' on 462 Squadron RAAF in 100 Group skippered by Pilot Officer Alfred Desmond John Ball RAAF was claimed northeast of Anholt by 28-year old Hauptmann Herbert Koch of I./NJG3. In June 1944 Alf Ball and Sergeant Maxwell James Hibberd RAAF the rear gunner formed a six-man crew with Flight Sergeant Neil Vernon Evans RAAF the navigator, Flying Officer Murray Frank the Australian bomb aimer, Flight Sergeant John Mickle Tait RAAF the mid-upper gunner and the wireless operator, Warrant Officer Ronald Reginald Taylor RAAF after posting to 27 OTU at Church Broughton where they trained together on Wellington bombers. Alf's fiancée, Miss Jennifer Little in Adelaide waited for news. He would have celebrated his 21st birthday on 11 April. Sergeant Fred Brookes the flight engineer and Flying Officer John Heggarty RAFVR, the German-speaking Special Duties Operator also died. Hibberd was the sole survivor on the crew. He and his CO, Wing Commander Peter McCallum Paull DFC were past students of the Queensland Agricultural High School and College at Gatton in south east Queensland before the war.

On the night of 12/13 April 28 Stirlings flew on Special Duty ops.

Warrant Officer James Harding in Halifax 'F-Freddy' on 296 Squadron at Earls Colne, Essex piloted by Flight Lieutenant Watson flew a SOE op to northern Holland: 'My last tour we flew many operations over the Netherlands flying under Fighter Command for administration. Though they were shorter than our other covert operations (e.g. northern Norway) they were far more hazardous. Our Halifax was loaded with an armed Jeep in the bomb bay with the doors removed. We took two SAS drivers and made our take-off at 2240 bound for a dropping zone north of the Zuider Zee. Earlier another Stirling[150] took off for the same DZ to drop several SOE and SIS five to ten minutes before we were due to arrive. They were to immediately take charge of the Jeep and supplies and with the aid of the SAS drivers, complete their mission. We crossed the English coast low enough to avoid detection by German radar but high enough so that German fighters could not splash fire us (firing from above and drawing their bullet splashes in the sea in a line across our plane). We made landfall about the Hook of Holland. Jack, the navigator gave instructions to the pilot to turn south to cover our objective and he hedge-hopped as much as we could with such an awkward cargo, turning north later on a vector to the DZ.

'As we saw the Zuider Zee in the distance we could see the Stirling on a parallel course well in front and above. We then became aware of two enemy aircraft, which were assumed to be FW 190s, approaching his starboard side. We turned on a course parallel with the lake using our camouflaged fuselage to give us cover against the dark ground. The enemy aircraft broke formation, one circling behind the slow Stirling, the other one flying in front and dropping flares whilst continuing in a semi-circle from the port side. This made the slow-flying Stirling a perfect silhouette. They both attacked alternately, their tracer looking like a string of beads. Indeed we did hear vaguely a May Day call, as it seemed to disappear somewhere over the Zuider Zee.

'We were still flying low on a diagonal vector keeping strict R/T silence. The enemy aircraft had broken off their contact with the Stirling and were flying in a line, which would bring them nearer to us. We were expecting a recall signal because our operation could not be completed without the other Stirling. As the enemy aircraft came within 800 metres I fired a short burst. It was a mistake, as it appeared to alert them to our presence. For a moment they manoeuvred then flew off westward, probably running out of fuel or ammunition. Our recall came at that moment and we gave a direction for our return. Alas, as we reached the Netherlands coast two more enemy aircraft came into view, obviously alerted. They could easily out-gun and out-fly us. We had already decided to use our intercom as our best defence with the bomb aimer in the nose keeping them to our starboard. Jack in the dome and myself in the tail turret, passed the information one to the other. I directed the pilot in the manoeuvres to keep both planes and flares at one side of us when possible and turning directly into any attack after the fighters had been committed and turning when the fighters were momentarily blind to us in the turn. This went on right

across the sea to the English coast. We were concerned as we were still carrying the Jeep under our bomb bay and though it helped us in making the fighters overshoot, we still had the problem of landing at our base. No one had ever landed with a jeep hanging underneath. If the fighters followed us we would be a sitting target. To our relief American Mustangs met us. We landed with a slight crosswind. It was an awful landing, possibly due to our nervous tension. It felt as if we had been in the air for hours but the whole operation was only three hours thirty minutes. There was a de-briefing and the usual ham and egg breakfast, then to bed with the sure knowledge that we would not sleep due to the caffeine tablets we had taken to keep us awake and alert. Unfortunately they always lasted longer than needed.'[151]

Air to air victories were now few and far between but on the night of 13/14 April Flight Lieutenant Kenneth D. Vaughan and Flight Lieutenant Robert Denison MacKinnon on 85 Squadron achieved the last victory over a He 219 'Uhu' at Kiel. MacKinnon picked up a fast moving contact below them and Vaughan dived after the unidentified aircraft. Twice Vaughan closed range to 1,000 feet. Then on the third time he closed in he thought that their twin-engined quarry had caught fire but MacKinnon got his head out of radar set and confirmed that it was the exhaust glow of his BMW 109-003 turbojet below the fuselage. (It was a He 219A-010/TL (V30 190101 of Erprobungsstelle Rechlin) which Heinkel had been testing for months). Vaughan immediately pushed the Mosquito's throttles fully open before giving the 'Owl' a half-second deflection shot on his jet at about 900 feet range. However, this burst produced no strikes, so he got dead astern in the turn and at 700 feet range fired another burst, which caused a large explosion and strikes on his starboard side. Vaughan gave him another burst 'for luck' and another explosion appeared on the port side. The 'Owl' burned from wingtip to wing tip and went down in a spin to starboard. (The aircraft reportedly suffered 40 per cent damage after crash-landing).

On 14/15 April 500 Lancasters and twelve Mosquitoes took part in an operation against Potsdam just outside Berlin. Although Mosquito bombers of the LNSF had attacked the 'Big City' almost continually this was the first time the Reich capital had been attacked by heavies since March 1944. One Lancaster was lost to an unidentified night-fighter over the target. 515 and 23 Squadron s flew the first Mosquito Master Bomber sorties in 100 Group, dropping green TIs and orchestrating attacks by 18 Mosquitoes on 141 and 169 Squadrons. Mosquitoes carrying Napalmgel bombs in the first of a series of operations code-named 'Firebash', attacked night-fighter airfields at Neuruppin near Potsdam and Jüterborg near Berlin. (Napalmgel is petrol thickened with a compound made from aluminium, naphthenic and palmitie acids hence 'napalm'. White phosphorous is added for ignition). The idea was borrowed from the US 8th Air Force following a chance conversation in a First Class compartment of an English locomotive between Wing Commander Charles V. 'Winnie' Winn DFC, 141 Squadron CO, en route to his station at West Raynham and a USAAF officer returning to his base in Norfolk. Winn was excited at the prospect of using this lethal

weapon on enemy airfields. Before the day was out he had obtained permission to use his squadron to drop the Napalmgel in Mosquito 100-gallon drop tanks, providing he could obtain his own supplies. He made a call to the 8th Air Force and 40-gallon and 50-gallon drums of Napalmgel soon began arriving at West Raynham, courtesy of the Americans. At first armourers, pumped it into drop tanks using hand pumps but then the Americans obliged with petrol-driven mechanical pumps and the operation became much easier.

On 16/17 April Oberleutnant Hans-Joachim Witzleb of III./NJG1 claimed a Mosquito but none were lost. Six Halifax aircraft on 462 Squadron RAAF took part in a feint 'Window' attack on Augsburg and another four operated with the Main Force. At Nordendorf twelve kilometres north of Gablingen at 0344 hours Oberfeldwebel Ludwig Schmidt of 2./NJG6 shot down Halifax III MZ467 Z5-C skippered by Flying Officer Allan Morris Lodder RAAF, born 24 May 1923 at Ipswich, Queensland. Lodder was thrown clear. He and Sergeant Ronald Eric 'Cas' Casterton, the rear gunner and Peter Athorn Naylor the bomb aimer were taken prisoner. In a later report, Lodder stated; The aircraft was damaged by two attacks from a night fighter. After the first attack the intercom and emergency light was U/S (unserviceable) and no orders could be given. The engineer raced past me towards the forward hatch with his clothes on fire and screaming. Doubtful if he bailed as he seemed to collapse opposite me. Do not know who bailed out. The aircraft controls were jammed after the first attack and flames spread as far as my compartment after the second attack. The fate of the others is unknown. They were probably wounded and unable to bail out as the aircraft was blazing for some time before I found myself outside and floating down after being blown out. I managed to release the chute. The aircraft crashed about five miles from Nordendorf, North West of Augsburg. I walked for an hour and a half in a westerly direction before giving myself up and received treatment. I had first and second degree burns to my face and hands and a broken foot and was treated in a German Hospital. I was later released as a stretcher case and repatriated to England.' This was the last Halifax shot down by German night fighters during the war. Robert 'Jock' McGarvie, the 21-year old mid-upper gunner, 'Ted' Windus the 24-year old navigator; Flight Sergeant Cecil 'Cec' Reginald Henry Foster, the 29-year old wireless operator; Sergeant John Edmund Arthur Gray, the 20-year old substitute flight engineer and Flight Sergeant Errol Dallas Tisdell RAAF, the 20-year old Special Duty wireless operator from Taree, NSW were killed. Joe Hollins, the usual flight engineer did not fly with the crew on their last flight. He went on to fly with Pilot Officer Frazer's crew on 22 April.

On the night of 19/20 April Flight Lieutenant Podge Howard DFC and Flying Officer 'Sticky' Clay DFC of BSDU at Swanton Morley were on a patrol to South Denmark and Island of Fyn airfields in a Mosquito NF.XXX equipped with AI.Mk.X, 'Serrate' IVA and 'Wolf'. They carried out a patrol of Fyn Island for an hour, during which time only one airfield was observed at Beldringe where they attacked a dispersed barrack site with two bursts

of two seconds each. Strikes were seen. The airfield was not lit and no flak was experienced. Many small convoys were seen on roads. At 2316 hours course was set from the island at 2,000 feet. Eight minutes' later Clay picked up a AI.Mk.X contact crossing starboard to port, range four miles and above. Howard turned behind the contact at 5,000 feet range when a visual was obtained on a Ju 88, which was identified with the aid of night glasses at 1,500 feet range. It was flying at 3,000 feet at a speed of 240 mph. Howard gave the Junkers a short burst from dead astern at 250 yards, which caused the outer half of the port wing to fall away. The Ju 88 rolled on its back and hit the ground spreading wreckage over a wide area and causing a large number of small fires. Their duty done the Mosquito crew set course for Norfolk, crossing out at Farre at 2340 hours and landing back at Swanton Morley at 0104 hours.[152]

On 24/25 April when the Mosquitoes of 100 Group and 2nd TAF ranged far and wide over the rapidly diminishing Reich fortunes were varied. Pilot Officer K. A. Norman and his navigator Flying Officer C. B. L. Warwick on 406 'Lynx' Squadron RCAF were fortunate to survive when their NF.XXX was shot down by flak during an 'Intruder' to Flensburg airfield. Norman crash-landed in flames from fifty feet and both men were captured. Wing Commander Howard C. Kelsey DFC* CO and Flight Lieutenant E. M. Smith DFC DFM on 515 Squadron in Mosquito FB.VI RS575/C got 100 Group's last air to air victory of the war when they shot down a Dornier Do 217 six miles north of Prague-Ruzyne, Czechoslovakia. Kelsey and Smith therefore had the distinction of scoring 100 Group's first and last victories of the war.[153] Also, Nachtjagd's 7,308th and final Abschuss of the war went to Hauptmann Herbert Koch, Staffelkapitän, I./NJG3, his 21st of the war.[154] In a classic 'Himmelbett' operation, the 'Experte' destroyed Halifax JP299 on 58 Squadron Coastal Command in the North Sea west of Skagen in Denmark at 0121 hours during a search for the German vessel *Tubingen*. Twenty-one year old Flight Lieutenant Arthur Thomas Charles Wilmot-Dear DFC and crew all perished.[155] On the 27th one of Nachtjagd's most distinguished aces, Major Rudolf Schönert, Kommodore of NJG5 who was on a sortie in a Junkers Ju 88G east of the Elbe when an electrical fault rendered his radar unserviceable was shot down by a Mosquito. He had shot down four Russian bombers east of Berlin earlier that night for his 62nd-65th victories. Schönert and his crew all bailed out safely and were rescued by German troops.[156]

For Squadron Leader 'Tim' Woodman a Mosquito pilot on the BSDU[157] 25 April was his 59th and final operation of the war: 'It was not the normal anti-German night fighter operation that Flight Lieutenant Paul Mellows,[158] Flight Lieutenant Callard, Flying Officer Terry Groves and I carried out, just a last crack at the Germans. We flew our NF.XXXs, which were fitted with various radar and electronic devices, up to Peterhead from Swanton Morley and refuelled. We took off again at dusk and then, in loose formation in the moonlight, crossed the North Sea, through the Skagerrak and up the Oslo Fjord. I thought that with the war virtually over the Norwegian airfields would have lots of German aircraft on them. We

attacked Lister where there was concentrated flak but no aircraft, Rygge (same again) and Kjeller (where there was no flak or aircraft) and Gardermoen (now Oslo airport). There was a lot of activity at Gardermoen with searchlights and star shells and the flak was intense, Flying Officer Groves getting a cannon shell through a wing. Eventually the airfield was plunged into darkness with only the searchlights probing for us and the flak snaking up. I called the chaps off and said, 'Let's go home.' I would never have forgiven myself if either of us had been shot down'.

Bomber Command's last bombing operations were the obliteration of Wangerooge and a failed attempt at destroying Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' at Berchtesgaden in daylight on 25 April and the oil storage depots at Tonsberg in Southern Norway on the following night. Yet, the war was not over for the weary bomber crews. Four days later they were called upon again but this time it was to drop food and not bombs. With the Germans at the brink of defeat, thousands of people in the western and north-western provinces of the Netherlands, which were still in German hands, were without food. Parts of the country had been under German blockade and 20,000 men, women and children had died of starvation during a very short period and the survivors were in a desperate plight. From 29 April to 7 May Lancasters flew 2,835 food sorties and PFF Mosquitoes made 124 sorties to 'mark' the dropping zones and Bomber Command delivered 6,672 tons of food to the starving Dutch people during Operation 'Manna'.

Large convoys of ships were now assembling at Kiel on the Baltic and it was feared that they were to transport German troops to Norway to continue the fight from there so on 2/3 May 142 Mosquitoes of 8 Group attacked Kiel in the last operation of the war for Bomber Command and Mosquitoes of five squadrons in 100 Group made attacks on airfields at Flensburg, Hohn, Westerland/Sylt and Schleswig/Jägel. Hohn and Flensburg airfields were bombed with Napalm and incendiaries directed by a Master Bomber. All told, a record 106 aircraft of 100 Group took part. A Mosquito on 169 Squadron was shot down by flak and the crew killed and two Halifaxes of 199 Squadron collided while on their bomb runs. These were the last Bomber Command aircraft to be lost on operations. Six days later the European war was over.

And what of the Nachtjagd?

At his Command Post on 8 May Major Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer penned these words to his 'faithful NJG4': 'The enemy has entered our land: our proud planes have been handed over to them; Germany is occupied and has unconditionally surrendered.

'Comrades, this disheartening fact is bringing tears to our eyes. The future lies dark and mysterious before us and will probably bring us grief and sorrow. One thing, though, will live within us forever - the tradition of our wing and our achievements. This tradition will help us and strengthen us when we are humiliated and it will help us stand proudly and look at the future with clear and open eyes.

'Once more I would like to recall to your memory the development of our glorious wing - so dreaded by the enemy. Exactly three years ago on 1

May 1942 the wing was established to protect southern Germany from night attacks. Mainz-Finthen, Laupheim, Jauvincourt and Laon-Athies were our points of support until in 1943 Florennes, Ste-Dizier and Coulommiers were added.

'We did not prove our development with empty names. There - where night after night our planes rose to the sky - the land of southern Germany and France is marked by numerous scars caused by the impact of destroyed and burning bombers. 579 bombers have been destroyed in bitter battles and under the most difficult conditions by NJG-4.

'Successful' night fighter operations in all kinds of conditions on Avranches, on Mynnvegen, on long columns of trucks and railroad cars in the hinterland have cost the enemy tremendous losses. Therefore the names 'Wildvogel!' and 'Wisbel' to us have a good sound. Distance flights over England were one of the last strikes of our wing. The destruction of pontoon bridges near Wesel meant a glorious ending to a hard battle.

'Comrades, all these successes could be realized only because of your intrepid attitude, your assiduity and your faith in Germany.

'At times the hard blows from our adversaries made it seem as if our unit also would be crushed under their rolling mill of war. But we always stood up again and returned their blows until last. This unequal battle caused us great sacrifices - 102 crews, including 400 officers and non-commissioned officers, did not return. Fifty officers, non-commissioned officers and crew died in the performance of their duty - some during ground attacks. They have given everything for Germany and our wing and have the right - from this moment on - to demand of us that we remain decent, respectable and upright German men.

'With a feeling of sadness, but also with a feeling of pride, I bid farewell to my wing and thank you for your confidence in me, which you showed in times of crisis.

'When again, in a different Germany, you must labour hard, then you my men of NJG-4 will feel that you have done everything within human power to win this war for Germany.

'Long live our beloved Fatherland!'

Endnotes Chapter 12

145 *The Other Battle* by Peter Hinchliffe (Airlife 1996).

146 Schall, who fought on the Eastern Front in 1943-44, had been wounded in action on 11 November 1943 by flak and made a belly landing south of Kertsch. Among many multiple victories, he scored thirteen on 31 August 1944. His victories in the west included three P-51s at Osnabrück on 8 November 1944 before he was shot down by a P-51 piloted by Lieutenant James W. Kenny of the 357th Fighter Group. He bailed out successfully.

147 Buckner died on 1 December 2005.

148 This was Kelsey and Smith's 4th victory in 100 Group and their 7th overall + 4 a/c destroyed on the ground and 1 'probable'. Three Halifaxes and three Lancasters FTR from the Hamburg raid.

Little damage resulted.

149 After the war he joined the Bundeswehr in 1957 and retired in 1972. He died on 10 April 2001.

150 LJ638 on 570 Squadron.

151 No records of German night-fighter claims on 12/13 April survives that could point to the identity of the claimant of LJ638.

152 Podge Howard fired 200 rounds (50 each gun) of 20mm of the sortie.

153 The first was in 141 Squadron Beaufighter VIF V8744 on 23/24 December 1943 when they destroyed a Ju 88 near Düren.

154 Koch died aged 82 on 17 March 2000.

155 Oberleutnant Erich Jung claimed a Lancaster on 26/27 April and on 2/3 May Oberleutnant Fritz Brant claimed a Halifax north of Hamburg.

156 Schönert had 65 claims in 376 combat sorties, including 35 Soviet flown aircraft. He became a Canadian citizen and bush-pilot after the war.

157 Bomber Support Development Unit.

158 In 1946, after he was demobbed, Paul Mellows married his fiancée, Jean, whom he had met at church tea party in Redhill, Surrey, the Saturday before Christmas 1943. They went to Cambridge so he could finish his law degree while Jean brought up their young family. He rowed in the record-winning 1948 boat race crew and went on to compete in that year's austerity Olympic Games, winning a silver medal (Great Britain was beaten in the final by the United States).

Acknowledgements

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Index

Aachen 50, 88
Abercromby, W/C William 'Jock' DFC* 9-10
Acheson, P/O George Victor 142
Adam, Fw Rudolf 'Rudi' 129
Adamski, Lt Theodor 143, 178
Aldridge, Sgt John 192-193
Alexander, S/L Edward Sudbury RCAF 13
Alkemade, W/O Nicholas S. 34-37
Allen, F/L Mike DFC* 54-55, 82, 88-89, 124
Allen, Frank 52
Allen, P/O Clifford Leslie Eldridge 32
Allies, F/L William D. 227
Allison, F/L George E. 112-114
Altner, Lt Herbert 192, 228
Annan, W/C Robert H. 51
Apel, Fähnrich Hans 200
Apel, Oblt Fritz 15
Armsberg, Fw Heinz 191
Armsdorfer, Uffz Josef 136
Armstrong, F/L Charles A. DFM MiD RNZAF 94
Armstrong, F/O John Keith RCAF 125
Artus, Lt Werner 178
Ashley, S/L Peter 117
Atcheson, P/O Sam DFC 25
Atkins, P/O 'Dickie' 30-31
Augenstein, Hptm Hans-Heinz 90, 153, 161, 167
Augsburg 24
Autenrieth, Hptm Hans 129-130
Axton, P/O Robert 45
Ayres, F/Sgt Norman S. 226

Baake, Oblt Werner 15-16, 50, 73, 224
Backwell-Smith, S/L R. 28
Bähr, Obfw Gunther 177, 182, 198
Bailey, F/O P. G. 109
Bailey, F/O R. K. 89-90
Baker, F/Sgt Frank H. 219-220
Ball, P/O Alfred D. J. RAAF 242
Ballier, Oblt Friedrich 224
Balmer, W/C John Raeburn OBE DFC RAAF 82
Baltenschat, Ofw 141
Bannock, S/L Russ RCAF 99, 166, 175
Barkenfeld, Uffz Karl 177
Barker, F/O 'Barks' 107
Barker, F/O Reginald 175
Barnes, F/L William George DFC 44
Barrett, S/L Charles Rennie DFC 142
Barte, Major Walter 226
Barwolf, Uffz Heinz 99
Bassingbourn 221
Bates, F/L Peter A. 140, 151
Baumann P/O George Robert RCAF 125
Beauchamp, W/C K. H. P. DSO DFC 154, 163-164
Becker, Uffz Friedrich 91
Becker, Gefreiter Hans 80
Becker, Fw Karl-Heinz 227-228, 231-233
Becker, Oblt Martin 'Tino' 22, 29, 42-43, 137, 174, 220
Bellis, F/O David B. 'Taffy' DFC* 91-92, 95, 105, 133
Bennett, F/Sgt Peter Anthony 60
Bennett, S/L Cyril Victor DFC 169
Bennett, Sgt Harry 'Benny' 204-205
Benson, S/L James Gillies 'Ben' DFC* 95, 140, 166, 175
Berger, Oblt 59
Bergmann, Hptm Helmut 47-50, 62-63, 72, 132
Berlin 8-9, 11-12, 16-17, 19, 31-32, 35, 116, 118, 161, 176, 244
Berlin-Werneuchen 115
Best, S/L Charles Brian DFC 142
Bettaque, Uffz Rolf
Beyer, Fw Konrad 74
Beyer, Uffz 'Willi' 100
Beyer, Uffz Herbert 103
Beyreuth airfield 107
Biak, Uffz Helmut 149
'Big Week' 22
Binbrook 72, 227
Bingen 164
Birkenstock, Oblt Hans Jörg 29
Birnie, P/O John 'Jock' 51, 53
Birrell, F/Sgt Eric 28
Bishop, P/O Cyril 61-62
Blunt, Barry 118
Bodenplatte, Unternehmen 172, 201
Böhner, Hptm Joachim 96
Boldt, Uffz 'Kurt' 121, 138
Bone, P/O 'Freddie' 56, 83, 100, 133-134
Borchers, Major Walter 93, 177-178, 217
Bornschein, Hptm Walter 61
Bourg-Leopold 80-81, 88, 90
Bowen, F/L Jack RAFVR 23
Boy, Lt Siegfried 226
Boylson, F/L William Wrixon DFC* RAAF 105
Bradwell Bay 128
Braham, W/C Bob DSO DFC* 39, 173
Brandon, F/L Lewis 'Brandy' DFC* 95, 140, 166, 175
Brant, Oblt Fritz 218
Braund, F/L Marwood Paul 195
Braund, John Prower 195
Breighton 24
Breissner, Oblt Claus 53
Breitenfelder, Ofw Heinrich 143
Breithaupt, F/O 'Bill' R. 'Bright-Eyes' RCAF 61, 80, 86, 91, 141
Bretigny 113
Breukel, Lt Wendelin 11
Breves, Hptm Adolf 73-74,163, 198
Bridgeman, Stanley 200
Bridges, F/O Vivian DFC 79-80, 91
Briegleb, Lt Walter 59, 93, 100, 146,158, 210
Brinkhaus, Oblt Franz 93, 210
Brinkmann, Oblt Arnold 'Fritz' 136, 218,138
Brisson, WO2 Joseph Paul Guy RCAF 58
Britten, F/O Ralph Edward Isaac DFC RCAF 167, 227
Bromley, W/C Neil B. R. OBE DFC 86, 121
Browne, F/L David Dorey RAAF 141
Bruce, F/O Bob 99, 166, 175
Brumby, F/O H. E. 'Bill' RNZAF 165
Brunner, Fw Josef 222, 228
Brunswick 13, 85, 133-134, 152
Bryson, F/O James Gilmour 'Gil' 8
Buchner, Obfw Hermann 234-237
Bulloch, F/L Charles Howard 'Tiny' 158, 173
Bunch, F/L 'Bunny DFC 151, 161, 164, 166-167, 219-220
Bunje, Lt Helmut 26, 201, 222
Burbridge, S/L Branse A. DSO* DFC* 96-99, 139-140, 149-150, 154, 156, 162, 164, 171, 173
Burkhard, Fw Helmut 226
Burley, F/L Philip Kenneth 112
Burn 30
Buschmann, Major Franz 105
Butler, F/Sgt Robert 15
Butler, Sydney 15
Butterfield, S/L William Ronald DFC MiD 92

Cadman, P/O William Guy 140
Caen 83, 92, 124, 128, 136
Cagienard, Sgt Robert Roland 60
Calder, F/L 126
Campbell, F/O John RAFVR 116
Campbell, F/Sgt Colin 53
Canty, P/O Edwin Albert RAAF 103
Carruthers, F/L William Maurice 24
Cash, P/O George W. 116-118
Cassan, P/O John Douglas RAFVR 104-05
Cather, F/L D. A. D. DFM 191
Chapman, F/L G. C. 165, 184-185
Chase, F/L William McLaurin RAAF 74-75
Chatfield, F/O E. B. DFC 94
Chemnitz 183, 192, 196, 216-217
Chown, P/O Clinton Warren 107
'Clarion', Operation 201
Clark, P/O Geoffrey John Reader 81
Clarke, F/Sgt John Seymour MacLeod 88
Clay, F/O Frank A. W. 'Sticky' 105,

149, 194-195, 245-246
Clayton, Friedericke 193-194
Cobern, F/O Charles A. RAAF 226
Cockayne, F/O 'Cocky' 181-182
Colborne, W/O 'Curly' 136
Coller, F/L John Harold DFC 44-45
Collins, F/O George Barrowby RAAF 161
Collis, F/L E. H. 166
Cologne 55-56
Coltishall 167
Comyn, F/O R. D. 122
Connolly, F/L Ralph 18-19
Connolly, W/C Patrick E. G. Gunnell 115
Cooper, F/L J. C. DFC 132
Cooper, P/O R. E. 29
Cooper, S/L Joe 18-19
Copus, Sgt P. J. 29-30
Cork, F/O A. J. DFM 167
Corke, F/O 161
Corless, P/O Alvin Van Dyke RCAF 104
Cosgrove, P/O Joseph Patrick RCAF 53-54
Cotterill, F/L Stanley H. R. DFC RCAF 25
Coulommiers airfield 108
Cousens, W/C Alan G. S.DSO DFC MC 51
Cowden, F/L John DFC 217
Cowgill, P/O Peter James 87-88, 163, 171
Cremer, F/L Gordon 12, 55-56
Croft 74, 211, 238
Cromarty, F/Sgt Les DFM 190
Crookes, F/O A. Norman 127-128, 130-132
Crowdy, F/O Charles William Cecil RCAF 60
Cunningham, F/L V. 169
Cunningham, F/O L. I. 99
Cunningham, W/C John 173
D'Hautecourt, Capitaine Henri J. B. 93
Darmstadt 39, 96, 137-141
David, F/O Bruce RCAF 134-135
Davies, S/L 'Bob' 205-207
Davies, S/L George DSO 114
Davis, F/L R. L. R. 92
Davis, F/Sgt Noel 67
Day, F/L J. A. DFC 24
de Leon, WO2 Mario A. F. RCAF 88
de Miremont, Hptm Alexander Graf Rességuier 94
Deane, W/C Laurence DSO DFC 70
Delacour, P/O Herbert Samuel RAAF 96
Delp, Fw Gustav 54
Denny, F/L Peter Frederick 50
Dickinson, F/Sgt Harry 142
Dickinson, P/O John Russell 62
Diepholz airfield 136
Dietrich, Hptm Helmuth 219
Dix, F/L R. J. 122
Dodwell, S/L Terence E. 'Doddy' RAFVR DFC* 116-118
Doh, Fw Gerhardt 12
Doleman, S/L Robert D. 'Dolly 151, 161,164, 166-167, 219-220
Dombrowsky, Otto 224
Donaldson, W/C David William DSO DFC 204
Döring, Lt Arnold 149-150, 155-156, 203-210, 242
Dorminger, Uffz Hans 217
Dortmund 85
Dotten, F/L Frank E. RCAF 221-222
Downes, F/L 'Johnny' DFC 172
Downey, F/L Joe DFM 94
Downham Market 116
Drawbridge, Sgt Ted 223-224
Dreher, Hptm Johan 196
Dresden 23, 192-193, 201-202
Dressel, Uffz Ernst 151
Drew, F/L S. L. 'Dickie' 147-148, 169-170, 185, 188-189
Drew, Sgt Cornelius Stanley 92
Drewes, Hptm Martin 32, 38-40, 72, 121-123
Drünkler, Hptm Ernst-Georg 196, 217-218, 222, 226-227, 241-242
Dübendorf 68-69, 178
Duckett, F/L Basil 86, 99-100
Duisburg 85, 148-149, 159
Dunbar, Noreen 52-53
Dunholme Lodge 8, 56
Düsseldorf 8, 56, 58, 88, 126, 143, 148, 152-153, 163, 171, 189, 196-199, 221
Duttmann, Lt 72
Dyson, Sgt Ricky F. GM 191

East Kirkby 23, 25, 226
East Moor 239
Eaton, F/O Wain 124
Eberspacher, Oblt Helmut 92
Ebhardt, Lt Rolf 124-125, 175-176
Eckert, F/L Al 13
Eckhoff, Major Max 197-198, 217-218
Eddy, F/L Charlie MBE 53
Edwards, F/O Jeffrey N. 157, 163
Eelde airfield 103
Eels, Ofw Johann 178
Ehrhardt, Oblt Peter 241
Eicke, Ofw Heinz 87
Eisele, Fw 92
Ellenor, Sgt John 'Jack' 64
Elliott, F/O Albert Clark RCAF 96
Elsässer, Oblt Siegfried 131-132
Elsham Wolds 144
Ely, F/O Vivian C. RAAF 202
Elvington 211, 213, 216
Ely, RAF Hospital 215
Emden 139
Emmerson, F/Sgt 133
Engelbach, F/L P. S. 'Paddy' 106
Engels, Johannes 183, 222
Engels, Oblt Wilhelm 151, 176, 201
Erichsen, Ofw Dieter 224
Essen 64, 161-162
Evans, W/C Paul M. J. 106
Exner, Ofw Walter 138

Fabian, Uffz Erwin 149, 157
Farrherr, Ofw Fritz 109
Fawcett, S/L Rowland Eden DFC 10-11
Fehre, Lt Paul 100, 228
Fellerer, Hptm Leopold 'Poldi' 64-65
Fengler, Lt Georg 74, 100, 218
Fenwick, S/L V. J. 215
Ferger, Hptm Heinz 242
Ferger, Oblt Heinz 106
Fernau, Fw Heinz 55
Field, F/O D. W. 151
Fifield, F/L J. S. 121
Filipzig, Uffz Heinz 58
Findley, P/O Stanley 93
Finlayson, F/O Colin 'Fin' 25
Finlayson, F/O R. H. 146
Fischer, Fw Helmut 169
Fischer, Lt Kurt Heinz 156-157
Fischer, Uffz Hans 86, 166
Fischer, Uffz Josef 26
Fladrich, Hptm Kurt 44-45
Flett, W/O Adam Herd DFM 12
Flint, F/Sgt 'Jimmy' DFM 86, 108, 133
Fogden, F/O Edward Sydney 142
Folley, P/O Frank Smith 61
Ford 13, 93, 161
Forshaw, S/L John Charles Noel 61
Förster, Major Paul 15
Förster, Oblt Josef 155, 208
Fossum, Captain Eric RNWAF 221
Foulkes, F/Sgt Geoffrey Grant RAAF 67
Foulsham 204, 214
Fowler, F/O L. 15
Fownes, F/O L. E. DFC 167, 227
Francis F/Sgt Frank 137, 151
Frank, Fw Rudolf 22, 32, 57, 59, 61
Frankenhauser, Uffz Franz 149, 157
Fredman, F/L Norman Henry DFC 73
Frey, Hptm Erich Karl 146
Friedrich, Gerhard 182, 191, 201, 221-222
Friedrich, Hptm Gerhard 'Gerd' 44, 96
Friedrichshafen 64-67
Fries, Lt Otto 58-59, 84, 155, 179-181
Frunske, Uffz Kurt 150
Full Sutton 100
Furse, S/L Denis C.DFC 172

Gall, Ofw Heinz 87
Gallacher, F/O A. C. DFC 93, 146
Gaul, Hptm Helmut 222
Gay, P/O Wilfred Charles RCAF 108
Gehrke, Uffz Heinz 130
Gelsenkirchen 95-96
Gerber, Oblt Karl 217
Gerstmayr, Ofw Lorenz 12
Gesse, Uffz Heinz 142
Gibb, W/C Walter F. DSO DFC 190, 217, 224
Giesecke, Ofw Herbert 136,158
'Gisela', Unternehmen 123, 203-216
Glitz, Wilhelm 'Willi' 29, 108, 132
Gloster, F/L Michael J. DFC 136
Glover, F/Sgt Edward A. 29
Glover, Sgt Brian 28

Goch 191
Godfrey, W/O D. L. 147
Gonsalves, S/L F. S. 'Gon' 86, 99-100
Göring, Reichsmarschall Hermann 19, 52, 68, 145
Gottwick, Günther 83
Goucher, F/L Richard Tannatt 'Dickie' 158, 173
Gould, Sgt Albert Norman 153-154
Gräfer, Gefreiter Alfred 155, 161
Gransden Lodge 73
Graveley 67
Grayshaw, P/O John 195
Great Massingham 137
Greenfield, F/L Albert Paulton DFC RCAF 240-241
Gregor, F/O 'Hank' 219-220
Gregory, P/O Doug 124
Greiner, Oblt Georg Hermann 73-74, 140, 143-144, 153, 216, 219
Griffiths, F/L D. J. 123
Grimsby 8
Grosser, Uffz Karl 196
Grove 92, 139, 169
Gunzi, F/L Guy 60
Gütersloh airfield 162, 200

Haberer, Uffz Georg 151
Habicht, Uffz Fritz 93-95
Haddon, F/L John Arthur Munro 130-131
Hadeball, Hptm Karl 145
Hagenau airfield 66
Hager, Hptm Johannes 58, 100-101, 168, 198, 226
Halcro, F/L James A. F.RCAF 139
Hall, P/O Horace Mervyn RAAF 44
Hallenbruch, Ofw 17
Halton, RAF 9
Hamilton, P/O Charles Blackley 96
Hammendörfer, Fw 143
Hammerschmitt, Uffz 'Willi' 91
Hampshire, F/L Herbert R. 106
Hampson, F/L J. B. 167
Handke, Uffz Erich 38-41, 72, 121-123
Hanneck, Oblt Gottfried 81, 121, 141, 189-190
Harding, W/O James 243-244
Hardy, P/O A. C. 187
Hargrove, F/L 188
Harris, Sir Arthur 148
Harvey, F/O Jack Arthur 121
Hatton, S/L R. F. 172
Hauck, Obergefreiter Heinz 187-188
Hausser, Ofw Max 164
Hauthal, Günther 47-48, 62, 132
Hawkins, P/O Stanley Allen 74
Hayes, Ron 65-66
Heath, F/O Lewis 168
Hecking, Hptm Paul 188
Heckmann, Uffz Heinrich 140
Hedgecoe, F/L Edward Richard DFC 161-162
Heggie, F/L D. H. RAAF 227
Heglund, Captain Svein DFC RNWAF 158-159, 166, 174-175
Heidenreich, Fw Walter 222
Heimesaat, Uffz Gunther 157
Heinemann, Fw Anton 16
Heiner, Oblt Engelbert 225
Heinrich, Fw Otto 71
Heinze, Unteroffixer Max Gunther 163
Helbig, Uffz Georg 'Schorsch' 129-130
Hellenbrucks, Ofw Werner 59
Helm, Lt Klaus 72
Hemming, W/O 53
Henderson, F/O George Simpson 133
Henke, W/O 133
Herget, Major 'Willie' 111
Herrmann, Oberst 'Hajo' 12, 43, 116
Hettlich, Lt Josef 123
Hibberd, Sgt Maxwell J. RAA 242
Hider, F/O S. A. RNWAF 221
Hill, F/L Charles Richard DFC 101
Hille, Uffz 66
Himmler, Heinrich 69
Hinde, F/Sgt Ronald 29
Hissbach, Hptm Heinz-Horst 138, 210
Hittler, Lt Ernst-Ewald 105, 134
Hockley, P/O Allan J. N. 'Skipper' RAAF 86-87
Hodgson, F/L William McKellar DFC AFM 167
Hoevermann, Lt Karl-Ernst 149
Hoffmann, Major Werner 'Red' 114, 223, 176, 223, 241
Hogg, F/Sgt William George RAAF 49
Hohn, Gefreiter Werner 26
Holderness, F/L Anthony J. 191-192
Holl, Uffz Adam 185
Holland, P/O Leslie George 'Dutch' 183-184, 215
Hollis, W/O 'Gus' 106
Holme-on-Spalding Moor 57
Holzer, Franz 82-83
Hommel, Fw Heinz 223
Honeyman, F/Sgt George 'Jock' 241
Hooke, F/O Bobby Elliott 132
Hooper, P/O Robert Cecil DFC 104
Hope-Robertson, F/L Alastair Tennant 122
Hopf, Hptm Werner 178
House, F/L Bill 141, 189
Howard, F/L Donald Ridgewell 'Podge' 105, 149, 194-195, 245-246
Hubbard, F/O Sidney Charles DFM 132
Huber, Oblt Johan 188
Huchler, Lt Otto 123
Hudson, F/Sgt Francis 'Frank' P. RNZAF 204-205, 207
Hudson, Sgt Robert Hall DFM 64
Hughes, F/L Dennis Lawrence 86, 138, 223, 241
Hunsdon 112
'Hurricane', Operation 148
Husemann, Ofw Werner 59, 136, 156, 195, 216
Hyde, F/L Horace Robert 16

Irvine, P/O J. 84
Irving, F/O G. S. 148-149

Jaacks, Ofw Egbert 142
Jabs, Hans-Joachim 70, 144-145
Jackson, Sgt Norman 'Jacko' VC 62
Jackson, W/C 120
Jadatz, Ofw Heinz 139
James, F/L F. H. RAAF 219
Jameson, F/L George 'Jamie' DFC RNZAF 127-128, 130-132
Jandrey, Hptm Siegfried 122
Jarsch, Oblt Lothar 143
Jephson, S/L 'Stan' 124
Johansen, Uffz Karl-Ludwig 220
Johanssen, Uffz Karl-Ludwig 22, 43
Johnen, Wilhelm 7, 11, 66-68, 79, 127, 187, 193, 201-202, 222
Johns, F/O Frederick Charles DFC 103, 107-108
Jones, Dr. R. V. 69
Jones, P/O Edgar RCAF 16-17
Jordan, Sir William 127
Josten, Uffz Alfons 86
Jung, Oblt Erich 153, 222
Jungmann, Oblt Bernhard 196
Juvincourt 72, 96

Kaiser, Ofw Karl 55
Kamp, Hptm Hans-Karl 90, 167
Kamprath, Lt 'Brinos' 66
Kamsties, Hptm Bruno 167
Kark, Lt Walter 32-34, 41-42, 144
Karlewski, Major Hans 110, 226
Karlsruhe 59-60
Kayll, F/L Anthony George Randall 64
Keller, Fw 136
Keller, Lt Otto 23, 90
Kelly, F/O William D. 'Ned' RAAF 190
Kelsey, W/C Howard C. DFC* 241, 246
Kelstern 53
Kemmis, F/O Patrick 56, 75, 133
Kemp, W/O Joseph Charles 74
Kendall F/O R. C. 'Killer' DFC 190, 217, 224
Kendall, F/O Philip Stanley DFC 101
Kenne, Uffz Hans 175
Kennedy, F/O J. A. 'Jimmy' 61, 80, 86, 91, 141
Kent, P/O M. G. 188
Kern, Lt Karl 101-103
Kerwin, F/O Raymond Thomas RAAF 143
Kestern, Sgt George 153
Kiel 138
Kingdon, F/O Robert V. RCAF 226
Kirkwood, F/O Frederick Godfrey RAAF 44
Kissing, Ofw Rolf 140
Kleebauer, Fw 114
Klefherien, Flight Officer 146
Kleve 191
Klöss, Oblt Hermann 144

Klünder, Obergefreiter Hans 80
Köberich, Oblt Gunther 222
Koch, Fw Robert 134, 136
Koch,Hptm Lt Herbert 25, 59, 242, 246
Kocher, Ltm Charles Emil 93
Kollak, Ofw Reinhard 114-115
Königsberg 138
Koppe, Fw Heinz 210
Köster, Hptm Alfons 167
Kraft, Fw George 39
Kraft, Hptm Josef 16, 197, 216, 227-228
Krahorst, Hptm Josef 143-144
Kramer, Ofw Martin 136
Kraus, Uffz Günther 92
Krause, Oblt Hans 91, 156, 214
Krauze, Oblt Fritz 112, 115
Kriegbaum, Lt Emil 136
Kubisch, Fw Walter 32, 41, 144
Kuhrt, Fw Johannes 91
Kursawe, Uffz Rudolf 200-201

Lahmann, Fw Karl Heinrich 122-123
Lake, F/O R. J. AFC 132
Lamm, Lt Kurt 230-232
Lampkin, W/O E. A. 136
Lange, Hauptmnann Harold 138
Lange, Lt Bruno 222
Langnickel, Oblt 136
Langowski, Gefreiter Johannes 101
Latimer, S/L Gerald Bennett RCAF 125
Lau, Oblt Fritz 85, 96, 136, 162, 226
Laub, Fw Karl 130
Lawrance, W/O Charles Henry DFM 13
Lawson, P/O Wilfred Carroll RCAF 88
Lawson, W/C K. 'Kenny' J.DSO* DFC 173-174
Le Havre 139
Leafe, F/O R. 133
LeBoutte, F/L Lucien J. G. DFC 82-83
Lee, W/O John R. 137
Leickhardt, Major Robert Hans 193, 217
Leipzig 23
Lent, Oberstleutnant Helmet 'Bubi' 32, 14, 32-34, 42-42, 100, 121, 144-145
Leopoldsburg 80-81
Leube, Hptm Hermann 86-87, 167
Leuenz, Ofw 137
Leverkusen 73
Lewis, Sgt Lionel H. 10
Lilley, W/O Robert DFC 66
Ling, F/O 'Jimmy' 40
Lippert, Oblt Erich 100
Lippe-Wiessenfeld, Prinz Egmont zur 15
Lissette, F/Sgt Leslie H. 'Lissie' RNZAF 71
Little Snoring 109, 169
Livesey, P/O Martin 107
Lockyer F/Sgt Alfred C. RNZAF 223-224
Lodder, F/O Allan M. RAAF 245
Löffelmann, Oblt Karl 19
Lohse, Uffz Walter 209
Lorenz, Hptm Herbert 100
Lossberg von, Viktor 43
Lovell, S/L Victor DFC 66
Luchmayer, Ofw Manfred 157
Lüddeke, Obfw Robert 196
Ludford, Johnny 22
Ludwig, Ofw Manfred 16
Ludwigshafen 88
Luma, 1st Lieutenant James F. 'Lou' 13, 25
Lütje, Major Herbert 195, 224, 227
'Lüttich', Unnternehmen 132
Lyon, F/Sgt John Douglas 26

MacDonald, F/O I. S. H. RAAF 94
MacDonald, W/O 'Mac' 136
MacFadyen, S/L Don A. DFC 25, 200, 217
Machleidt, Lt Harald 101
Maciejewski, Obergefreiter Kurt 29
MacKinnon, F/Sgt M. D. RCAF 65
MacKinnon, F/Sgt Robert Denison 141, 178-180, 189, 244
Mäckle, Oblt Hans 119-120
Magdeburg 8, 13-15, 22, 179, 191, 193, 228, 230, 233, 238, 241
Maguire, F/O John RAAF 183
Mahle, Ofw Paul 20, 66-67, 69-70
Mailly-le-Camp 50, 70-73, 81
Mallett, F/O Ronald S. DFC 82-83, 106
Mangelsdorf, Ofw Rudolf 179
Mansfield, W/C Nelson Reuben DFC 13
Manston 84, 89, 106-107, 170, 205
Marder, F/O Moie RCAF 16
Marstaller, Lt Wolfgang 75, 78
Martin, F/L T. J. RCAF 139
Martin, F/O Thomas Russell RCAF 73-74
Martin, S/L Harold B. M. 'Mick' DSO DFC 123
Marwood-Elton, G/C Nigel DFC 30
Matheson, P/O Archibald A. DFM RNZAF 110
Mathews, F/L John Owen 'Jimmy' 100, 147, 155, 161, 166, 171, 221
Matzak, Oblt Kurt 196-197, 217
Matzuleit, Uffz Kurt 14
Mauss, Lt Ernst 92
McAllister F/O Victor DFM 142, 154-155, 158, 164
McCann, P/O Leonard Myles RCAF 32
McGlinn W/C Desmond John 206
McIlvenny, F/O Ralph J. 131
McIndoe, Sir Archibald 215
McKinnon, F/L Allan Francis DFC RAAF 32
McLean, W/O G. DFC 93, 146
Mead, F/L Robert Frazer RCAF 74
Meier, Oblt Hartmut 172
Meier, Ofw Werner 66
Meissner, Lt Hans 228
Meister, Hptm Ludwig 'Luc' 10-11, 218
Mellows, F/L Paul 147-148, 169-170, 185, 188-189, 246
Melrose, W/O Alan A. W. 106
Melun airfield 95
Mepal 52, 121
Meurer, Hptm Manfred 15
Meyer, Ofw Friedrich 176
Meyer, Ofw Hermann 80
Michelon, 2nd Lt R. FFAF 213
Mildenhall 44
Miller, P/O Wilfred Handel 'Andy' 56, 83, 100, 133-134
Miller, W/C Charles M. DFC** 95
Millington, F/O G, M. 148-149
Mills, F/Sgt 'Jack' 60-61
Misch, Fw Heinz 208, 210, 218
Mitchell, S/L 81
Mitterdorfer, Lt Karl 142
Möckel, Lt Wolfram 166
Modrow, Hptm Ernst-Wilhelm 58, 84, 90, 94, 104, 143
Möller, Fw Klaus 136, 210
Money, P/O 154
Montgomery, P/O Robert 62
Moore, F/L A. F. 157
Morath, Gefreiter Otto 92
Morenz, Fw Rudolf 'Rudi' 224, 226
Morlock, Ofw Wilhelm 'Willi' 91, 100, 153
Mudie, F/Sgt James RAAF 9
Mullebner, Fw Franz 86
Müller, Hptm Friedrich-Karl 'Nasen' 115-116, 177, 196
Mulroy, P/O 190
Munich 59-60
Münster-Handorf 15, 94, 139, 143, 149, 157, 161, 179-180, 185-186, 188
Murdoch, S/L Tony O'Shea RNZAF 60, 62
Murphy, F/O J. O. 109
Murrow, Ed 9
Musgrove, F/L A. C. 121
Mussolini, Benito 68

Nabrich, Oblt Josef 84, 93-94, 100
Nagel, Uffz Johannes 55
Nessner, Steve 205
Neumann, Uffz Alfred 167
Neville, F/L John 241
Neville, F/O Arthur John 101
Ney, Major Berthold 'Petz' 209
Nicholls, P/O George Edwin 61
Nichols, F/O George Frederick 158
Nolan, P/O Allan William RAAF 72
North Killingholme 223
Notelle, Capitaine FFAF 211
Nowak, Uffz Heinz 166
Nugent, Carlos 28
Nuremberg 37- 43, 62, 113, 159, 173
Nye, F/O Robert George 95

O'Farrell, F/O 'Dick' 12, 55
O'Leary, P/O A. A. DFC** 84, 94
Oakington 81, 116
Oliver, F/O Richard D. 233

Oliver, F/O Richard Kay RAAF 190
Oloff, Lt Heinz 11, 169-170, 185
Onley, F/L Ronald Charles 161
Oppermann, Uffz Hugo 100
Osborne, F/O Edward Walter 142
Ostheimer, Fw Fritz 8-9, 14-15
Ostrowitzki, Leunant Clemens 165
Oswold, F/L James F. DFC 136
Oulton 86, 204-207, 217, 220
Owen, F/O 'Ginger' 142, 154-155, 158, 164

Paddick, 'Paddy' 204-205
Page, S/L Alan Geoffrey DFC 70
Parchim 234-235, 238
Parker, F/L 'Sailor' DSM 147
Paston-Williams. F/L Harold 'Bill' 134-135
Patkin, F/L Leo Braham RAAF 9
Paull, W/C Peter McCallum DFC 242
Pawsey, F/O Thomas RAFVR 197
Peden, F/L David Murray RCAF 104
Peltz, Oberst Generalmajor Dietrich 52, 204
Penrose, W/O Alan 'Penny' 100, 147, 155,161,166, 221
Perks, F/O R. H. 'Dickie' DFC 86, 106, 138, 223, 241
Peter, W/O 'Bob' DFC RAAF 67
Peters, Oblt Erhard 115
Petersmann, Uffz Hans 103
Peticolas, René 63
Petz, Ofw Georg 'Schorsch' 38-40, 121-122
Petzold, Uffz Volkhard 138
Pfisterhammer, Oberfähnrich Erhard 157
Pforzheim 151, 161, 177, 201-202, 222
Phillips, F/L 'Mickey' 111, 155
Pierce, F/O J. W. 215
Pietrek, Lt Norbert 80
Piksen, Jan 135
Piwarz, Stabsfeldwebel Walter 149
Plass, Lt Joachim 93
Plumer, F/L B. N. DFC 188
Pollmer, Uffz Erich 108
Polzer, Uffz Josef 80
Porter, Sgt James 144
Posselt, Uffz Heinz 157
Potthast, Lt Friedrich 'Fritz' 74
Poulter, S/L Cecil Wardman MiD 59
Poulton, F/L Geoffrey E. 101
Preston, W/O R. E. 108-109
Pringle, F/O Frank E. 124
Probert, F/O Arthur Harold RAAF 49
Procter, S/L P. C. 215-216
Prutton, Sgt Don 206-207
Puttfarken, Major Dietrich 52-53

Rabone, S/L Paul Wattling DFC 103, 107-108
Raby, F/L Denis DFC 86, 108, 133
Rademacher, Gefreiter Karl 86
Radford, F/Sgt 224-225
Radusch, Major Günther 24, 107, 145
Raht, Hptm Gerhard 16, 177, 210, 221
Rasper, Lt Hans 222
Rate, F/L Allan J. RAAF 202
Rattle, P/O William F. RAAF 96
Rauer, Fw 50, 89
Rauth, Major Hubert 217-218, 226
Raymond, P/O W. D. 119-120
Rechenberg, Uffz Hans 137-138
Reed, P/O Harry 'Shorty' 121
Reeves, S/L Neil DSO DFC 84, 90
Rehkate, Oblt 218
Reichenbach 233
Reichenbach, Fw Fritz 142, 161, 200-201
Reitmeyer, Fw Ernst 114
Rembecki, Sgt Franciszek 96
Reschke, Hptm Heinz 25-26
Reul, Lt Friedrich 217
Reuter, Oblt Heinz 196-197
Revigny 114
Rhodes, Sgt Sidney 174
Rice, F/L Graham James 18, 59, 106, 109-110
Richartz, Fw Gustav 201
Ridgewell, F/L Frederick H. RAFVR 197
Rix, F/L Norman DFC 220
Roberts, F/O E. D. 'Robbie' 214-215
Roberts, F/O Murray 124
Robinson, F/O G. D. 129, 131, 135-136, 187
Rogerson, F/O James Gibson 18, 59, 106, 109-110
Rognan, F/O Everett R, RCAF 64
Rohlfing, Uffz Walter 11
Rökker, Oblt Heinz 26-28, 30-33, 37, 92, 132, 153, 195, 198, 221
Rolland, Lt Heinz 158
Romahn, Obergefreiter Otto 136
Rosbottom, F/O John Herbert 142
Rose, Lt 140
Rosenberger, Gefreiter Wilhelm 143
Ross, F/L 157
Rowlands, F/L Desmond DFC 40-41
Rowley, F/L Walter DFC 191
Roy, Jules 211-213, 216
Ruckert Uffz Richard 192
Rudnik, Uffz 138
Ruge, Fw 'Willi' 155
Rumpelhardt, Lt Fritz 199-200
Runzel, Oblt Ernst 154
Rupp, Fw Bruno 218, 241
Ruppel, Hptm-Major Heinrich 226
Ruselsheim 137
Russell, F/L David 'Russ' 107
Rutherford, F/L Norman Bayne AFC 142
Ryall S/L 190
Ryalls, S/L D. L. 167
Ryan, F/O Keith Francis RAAF 49
Ryan, F/O T. P. RNZAF 196, 224

Sabel, Obergefreiter Christian 66
Salmon, F/O A. J. 122
Salt, Sgt D. J. 26
Sanderson, F/Sgt Eric 30-31
Sandford, F/L 115
Sandvoss, Uffz Georg 86
Sarzio, Unterofficier Gustav 121, 154
Saunders, F/L E. V, Saunders DFC 112
Schadowski 241
Schadowski, Oberfeledwebel Hans 138, 177
Schäfer, Major Suren Geert 100
Schall, Oblt Franz 235-238, 248
Schaus, Oblt Jakob 83, 91, 188
Scheibe, Ofw Gerhard 15
Schellenberg 69
Schellwat, Ofw Fritz 24
Scherfling, Ofw Karl-Heinz 121
Scherl, Uffz 161
Scheuerlein, Uffz Herbert 163
Scheve, Fw Eberhard 86-87
Schierholz, Obfw Hans-Georg 216
Schindler, Uffz Alfred 139
Schirmer, Lt Günther 143
Schirrmacher, Hptm Ulrich 196, 198, 201
Schläge, Lt Heinz-Joachim 158
Schlette, Fw Walter 100
Schlomberg, Uffz Günther S. 108
Schlutter, Uffz Wilhelm 158
Schmalfeldt, Uffz Heinrich 108
Schmid, Generalleutnant Josef 'Beppo' 52, 94, 110, 203
Schmidt, Fw Günther 210-211
Schmidt, Fw Heinrich 196
Schmidt, Oblt Dietrich 'Dieter' 12-13, 60-61, 71-72, 96, 122,124, 178, 227
Schmidt, Ofw Heinrich 191
Schmidt, Ofw Ludwig 140-141, 177, 182
Schmidt, Uffz Kurt 161
Schmidtke, Oblt Oskar 93
Schmitz, Gerhard 139-140
Schnaufer, Major Heinz-Wolfgang 8, 14, 39, 50-51, 60, 64, 74, 88, 103, 133,143, 147, 198-200, 216, 218, 247-248
Schneider, Fw Gottfried 138
Schneider, Hptm Karl-Ernst 155
Schneider, Uffz Walter 198
Scholefield, F/L Leslie DFC 163-164
Scholtz, P/O Neville John W. 104
Scholven/Buer 103-104, 107, 116
Schönert, Major Rudolf 145, 246, 248
Schopp, 'Willi' 47, 50, 132
Schratter, Fw Robert 90, 99
Schröder, Hptm Eduard 168,176, 241
Schulenburg, Oblt Heinrich 80
Schulte, Oblt Helmuth 21-22, 86, 183, 219
Schultze, Uffz Gerhard 146
Schuster, FW 222
Schwabish Hall airfield 158
Schwalbach, André 63
Schweinfurt 24, 60-61, 64
Schwemmer, Fw Reinhold 140

Seaman, F/O Charles R. 29
Seehaber, Uffz Gotthard 107
Semrau, Major Paul 107, 176
Serwein, Uffz Ludwig 92
Seuss, Lt Wilhelm 12
Shäfer, Lt Hans 179
Sharpe, F/O George E. RCAF 9
Shaw, S/L John Leslie 92
Shelton, F/O A. P. W. RAAF 213
Short, Jack 208, 214
Shorttle, F/O Joseph Malpass DFM 197
Shove, 1st Lieutenant Frank S. USAAF 64
Shroder, Hptm Eduard 219
Siddons, F/O R. H. 154
Siebert, Uffz Heinz 107
Simonsohn, Fw Wilhelm 82-83
Simpson, P/O William 16
Simpson, Sgt Raymond George Victor 87
Sinner, Major Rudolf 'Rudi' 234-235
Sjuts, Walter 142
Skellingthorpe 240
Skelton, F/L 'Bill' S. DSO* DFC* 96-99, 139-140, 149-150, 154, 156, 162, 164, 171, 173
Skorzeny, Otto 68-69
Sleep, F/L K. S. 176
Smart, F/O R. R. 100
Smith, 1st Lieutenant John K. DFC 74
Smith, F/L Edward M. 'Smitty' DFC DFM 241-242, 246
Smith, F/L Robert Arthur 169
Smith, F/L Thomas Noel 155
Smith, F/L Tommy 181-182
Smith, F/O J. W. 123
Smith, F/Sgt S. F. 123
Snape, P/O Desmond 15
Söde, Unteroffizer Wolfgang 157
Soika, Fw Alfred 153
Somerscales, S/L 'Stan' DFC 57-58
Somerville, S/L James Dean 'Red' 129, 131-132, 135-136, 187
Sommerau 179, 217
Söthe, Hptm Fritz 91
Sparks, S/L E. N. M. 70
Speckmann, Hptm August 124
Spells, Captain Tadas 146
Spicer, F/Sgt L. J. S. BEM 191
Spietsma, Captain Edward H. 11
Spoden, Oblt Peter 165, 219
Staffa Fw Alfred 58-59, 84, 155, 179-181
Stainton, F/O R. G. 'Bob' 112-114
Stanbury, P/O Frederick Herbert 142
Standley-Smith, Sgt Philip 92
Starr, W/C Norman John 'Jack' DFC 83-84
Staziker, F/O F. 121
Stead, F/O P. Y. DFC 12
Ste-Dizier 27, 29, 58-62, 84, 115, 247
Steinbock, Unternehmen 203
Steins, Fw Günther 161
Ste-Loup 123
Ste-Malo 131
Stendal 14, 117, 181
Stephen, P/O Sid 57
Stephens, F/O D. H. 124
Stephens, S/L Harry Bernard DFC 73
Stettin 12, 136, 138, 177, 192,
Stevens, Sgt Bill 61-62
Stevenson, F/O John 132
Stewart, F/L Kenneth W. 'Chunky' RNZAF 163, 201
Stewart, F/O George RNZAF 217-218
Stieghorst, Oblt Paul 150
Stockley, F/L 'Jimmy' 165, 184-185
Stone, F/L Donald Edward Ross 143
Stoneman, P/O Maurice 22-23
Strassner, Lt Johannes 138
Streib, Oberstleutnant Werner 145
Ströhlein, Ofw Josef 175
Strüning , Hptm Heinz 84-85, 92, 100, 104, 111, 118, 126, 145, 166-167
Stumpff, Generaloberst Hans-Jurgen 19, 52
Stürmer, Uffz Adolf 92
Stuttgart 23, 25, 123-124
Surman, F/L John Clark 132
Sutcliffe, F/O J. K. 100
Swannington 92,155, 163
Swanton Morley 245-246
Swartz, F/Sgt Stanley John 108
Symon, F/O Robert O. 95, 158-159, 166, 174-175
Szameitat, Hptm Paul 173

Tank, Uffz Joachim 89-90
Taylor F/L William 157, 163
Taylor, W/O D. A. 224-225
Terrien, Lieutenant Jean M. B. L. FFAF 213
Teschner, Lt Otto 143
Tesmar, Hptm von 242
Tetzlaff, Ofw Heinrich 166
Teufert, Oblt Karl 178
Thomas, F/L Hugh Brtian 96
Thomas, P/O Gwilym Rhys 142
Thompson, F/L 126
Thompson, F/Sgt Jack 168
Thompson, P/O Carleton Stewart RCAF 96
Thorne, S/L 'Ted' 18
'Thunderclap', Operation 125, 192, 216
Thurow, Uffz Karl Heinrich 188
Tischtau, Manfred 56
Tischtau, Oblt Manfred 12
Tonn, Oblt Wolfgang 157
Trappes 90
Trenk, Uffz Walter 200
Trevor-Roper, F/L Richard A.D. DFC DFM 41
Tripke, Ofw Richard 12
Trossy-Ste-Maxim 125
Truscott, F/L Philip Vincent 86, 93, 121
Tull, F/O Desmond Trevor 87-88, 163, 171
Turner, F/L C. W. Topsy' 241
Turner, W/O Les 137, 151
Turvey, F/O Ronald George RAAF 123-124
Tweedale, S/L J. 99, 169
Twente 119
Twiss, Lieutenant Peter RN 132
Ulrich, Uffz Christiasn 12
Urft Dam 15

Vantilt, George 81-82
Vaughan, F/L Kenneth D. 178-180, 244
Veale, F/O N. 122
Veitch, F/Sgt D. G. N. 107
Venlo 139
Verity, Sgt F. 108-109
Villeneuve 114
Vinke, Ofw Heinz 11
Vipond, P/O Thomas Elliott 32
Virtue, F/L James Denholme RCAF 122
Volkel 101, 107, 122, 136, 149, 157
Volkel, Uffz Oskar 86
Vollert, Uffz Hermann 17
von Bonin, Hptm Eckart-Wilhelm 'Hugo' 24, 29
Vornbrock, WO2 Wilfred Ferdinand RCAF 58

Wade, F/Sgt Peter Stuart RAAF 88
Wal, Bote van der 135
Wal, M. Ebeltje van der 135
Waldbauer, Uffz 73
Waldmann, Fw Franz 198, 201
Wallnut, F/Sgt Bernard J. 136
Walter, Helmut 185
Walter, Obergefreiter Horst 100, 158
Walter, Oblt Albert 12
Waltham 8
Wanne-Eickel 123, 156, 179, 183, 190, 192
Warboys 24
Ward, F/O Geoffrey 8-9
Ward, P/O John Francis 82
Watson, F/L James Andrew RCAF 64-66
Watson, F/L 243
Watt, F/O J. A. 166
Watts, W/C Stephen D. DSO DFC MiD RNZAF 110
Webb, F/L S. D. RCAF 116
Webb, F/Sgt Donald G. 'Spider' DFM 79-80, 91
Webster, F/O J. A. 146
Weigel, Hptm Kurt-Heinz 173-174, 217
Weimann, Uffz Alfred 26
Weise, Generaloberst Hubert 19
Weiss, F/O Gordon Thomas RCAF 153
Weisteen, Captain Tarald RNWAF 157-158
Welfare, F/L Denis DFC* 91-92, 95, 105, 133
Welham, W/O Harry 'Butch' 106
Wellington, P/O Arthur 'Wimpy' 94
Welter, Lt Kurt 138-139, 141-142, 146, 161, 174, 176, 200-201, 223,

228, 230-234
Welz, Uffz Walter 29
Wennholz, Uffz Heinrich 139
Wenning, Lt Wolfgang 54
Werthner, Fw Johan 'Hans' 172
Wesseling 116
West Raynham 79, 66, 106, 124, 191, 216, 244-245
Weston, P/O Clarence E. 132
White, F/L Harry DFC* 54-55, 82, 88-89, 124
White, F/O J. F. M. 89
White, F/O Larry USAAF 73-74
Whitham, F/Sgt J. R. 161
Wickenby 8
Wilde, F/L Eric Lawless 142
Wildhagen, Fw Karl 139
Wildschutze, Uffz Friedhelm 134
Wilfert, Uffz Eugen 106
Willmann, Uffz 138
Wills, P/O Harold Callaway 25
Wilmot-Dear, F/L Arthur T. C. DFC 246
Wilsch, Unteroffiziee Rudolf 114
Wilson, F/O William Harold RCAF 74
Wilson, S/L George Heath DSO DFC 105
Wilton, F/L Walter RCAF 8
Win, F/L F. D. RNZAF 196, 224
Wingham, F/O S. I. 'Tom' 57-58
Winn, Ofw Rudolf 241
Winn, W/C Charles V. 'Winnie' 142, 244-245
Wiseman, F/L Richard DFC 114
Wiseman, Sgt Basil Guy RAFVR 49
Witchford 51-53
Witt, F/O Arthur Frederick 154
Wittgenstein, H. A. L. P., Prinz zu Sayn- 5-20
Witzleb, Oblt Hans-Joachim 245
Woehle, Uffz Günther 154
Woeste, Lt Achim 137
Wolf, Lt Günther 209
Wolff, Obergefreiter Joachim 157
Wöllenhaupt, Uffz Werner 157
Wood, F/O T. R. 133
Woodbridge 119-120
Woodman, F/L Ronald George 'Tim' 56, 75, 133, 154, 241, 246-247
Woodstock-Stevens, W/O George Arthur 22
Wooldridge, F/Sgt Louis Patrick DFC 90, 125
Woolfox Lodge 59
Woolven, George Leonard 94
Wright, F/L 'Pinky' 25, 217
Würzburg 202, 221
Wuttke, Uffz 155
Wynne, F/L Johnny 220-221
Wyton 16
Young, F/O J. N. W. 154
Young, F/O William Archibald 108
Young, F/Sgt 'Bob' 183-184, 215
Young, F/Sgt L, Max RAAF 233

Zettel, Lt Hans 58
Zorner, Oblt Paul 11, 22, 93, 145, 217

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